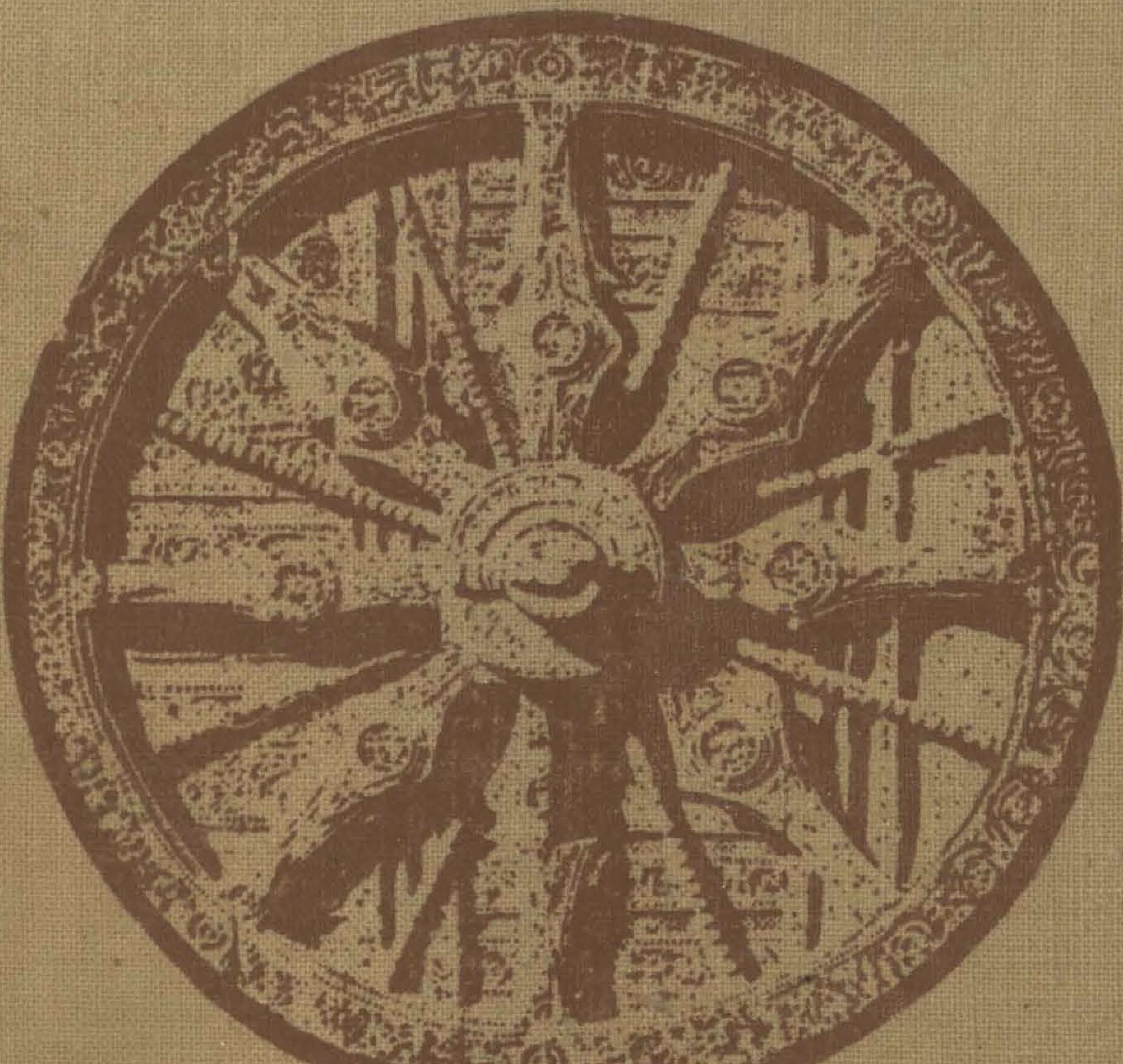


THE ROLE OF BHAGAVAD GITA IN INDIAN HISTORY

THE ROLE OF BHAGAVAD GITA IN INDIAN HISTORY

PREM NATH BAZAZ

STERLING PUBLISHERS PVT LTD
New Delhi 110016 Jullundur-3

First Edition, 1975
Printed in India
Published by S. K. Ghai, Managing Director, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
Printed at Dhawan Printing Works 26-A, Mayapuri, Phase 1 New Delhi-110027
[redacted]

Introduction

In the enormous Indian literature, both sacred and profane, produced from pre-historic age to contemporary times, no other book has earned such a tremendous reputation as the poem of seven-hundred verses entitled the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Lord's Song). Not long after it appeared in its present form, in the early centuries of the Christian Era, the philosophy of life contained in the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna fascinated the Hindus steeped in social malaise. The poem became the subject of special study by intellectuals and, in course of time, the most adored scripture of the Hindu community.

Whether or not a Hindu has had the opportunity to read the *Bhagavad-Gita*, or even to have seen a copy of the sacred poem, his ideas, conduct and behaviour are deeply influenced by its teachings because the prevalent Hindu culture is founded on them and the Hindu moral life draws sustenance from them. Aurobindo Ghosh says that the influence of the *Bhagavad-Gita* "is not merely philosophic or academic but immediate and living," and that "its ideas are actually at work as a powerful shaping factor in the revival and renewal of a nation and a culture."[1]

Any book to have become so popular and powerful in shaping the destiny of a people must have responded to their inner urges and fulfilled their vital social needs. Popular literature is an echo of national life. If the *Bhagavad-Gita* secured the highest position in Hindu religious literature, practically excelling even the *Vedas*, it must have ably presented crucial human problems as well as given vent to the excruciating anguishes of the society of the age in which it was composed and put into circulation. Those problems and agonies must have continued unresolved through the centuries to maintain the undiminished popularity of the philosophic lore. What are those grave problems and intense feelings and why did the remedies proposed by the *Bhagavad-Gita* fail to resolve them? This book tries to answer these momentous questions.

No sooner had the *Gita* achieved the unique distinction of

1. *Essays on the Gita*, p. 543.

being treated as sacred revelation of the highest doctrine, than innumerable commentaries, some of them quite ingenious, came to be written on its contents. It has been translated not only in all regional languages of India, but also in most of the civilised languages of the world. Hardly a year passes by when a new translation or commentary is not published here or abroad.

Broadly speaking, Indian scholars have little to offer by way of criticism in their commentaries; their remarks are usually laudatory and if occasionally some one among them raises a doubt on a point he immediately covers it up by long explanations to uphold the integrity and sublimity of the holy teachings. Hindu writers find the most advanced philosophy in the scripture; to them it is the last word in human wisdom. Foreign scholars are not uncritical though some of them are equally lavish in its praise. In his introduction to a translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* produced jointly by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood in 1945, Aldous Huxley says : "The *Gita* is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the Perennial Philosophy ever to have been made. Hence its enduring value, not only for Indians, but for all mankind."

But some European commentators have brought a sense of objectivity to bear on their views of the poem, and while paying tributes to the divine teachings, they have pointed out that the holy text is not free from those blemishes which are more or less characteristic of all other scriptures. On the whole, however, it may be stated that there is not a single thoroughly critical study of the *Bhagavad-Gita* available for an accurate assessment of the historical role that the great poem has played in Indian society.

It is generally claimed that the *Bhagavad-Gita* is a treasure-house of profound knowledge and great wisdom; that it contains the mysterious secrets of spiritual life and is the best moral code for the guidance of a cultured society. Some of the more enthusiastic Indian writers, endowed with imagination, have even suggested that the teachings of the sacred poem can help the world, especially Western nations, now plagued by intractable social and moral problems born of scientific advance and technological progress. Neither any Indian teacher nor any

foreign scholar, however, has taken the trouble of telling the suffering humanity why the Indians deteriorated, intellectually and morally, lost freedom, and suffered for hundreds of years after they had given unstinted allegiance to the doctrines of the *Bhagavad-Gita*.

There is, I suppose, concensus on two points or facts of history: One, that the *Gita* has been the most venerated scripture of Hindus from the fourth century A.C., if not earlier, and two, that India plunged into a dark age at almost the same time from which she may or may not have emerged in 1947, when the British power came to an end.

Jawaharlal Nehru has drawn a clear picture of the Indian society in the pre-*Gita* and the post-*Gita* periods, though he does not allude to them as such. Dividing the first thousand years of the Christian Era into two, he says about the earlier centuries: "It is a period of a vigorous national life, bubbling over with energy and spreading over in all directions. Culture develops into a rich civilization flowering out in philosophy, literature, drama, art, science and mathematics. India's economy expands, the Indian horizon widens and other countries come within its scope." And what happened in the second half of the millennium when the *Gita* doctrines had gained the wide acceptance of the people ? Nehru answers: "Yet for all these bright patches, an inner weakness seems to seize India, which affects not only her political status but her creative activities...as the millennium approached its end, all this appears to be the afternoon of a civilisation, the glow of the morning had long faded away, high noon was past...the heart seems to petrify, its beats are slower, and gradually this petrification and decay spread to its limbs... . The sense of curiosity and the spirit of mental adventure give place to a hard and formal logic and a sterile dialectic. Both Brahminism and Buddhism deteriorate and degraded forms of worship grow up."[2] Why did this dismal fate overtake the country when it had welcomed and chosen for its guide the exalted doctrines of the *Bhagavad-Gita* ? Unless and until this riddle is solved any study of Indian history must remain unintelligible.

2. *The Discovery of India*, p. 199-201.

Contrary to the view sedulously fostered by Brahmin writers after the downfall of Buddhism that the idealist or the so-called spiritualist philosophy is the only system of thought evolved by Indian thinkers since the Vedic Age, the fact remains that for a long period stretching roughly from 500 B.C. to 500 A.C. the widely accepted philosophy in this country was rationalist-materialist. It had bred a radically different outlook and effected basic changes in the primitive social structure raised earlier by Brahmin theology. Notwithstanding persistent efforts made to ignore or underrate the importance of this revolutionary development, its positive achievements form an inalienable part of Indian culture. To accurately assess the historical significance of the *Gita* doctrines, it is essential to have an understanding of this deliberately neglected part of Indian study. I have, therefore, endeavoured to shed some light on the thought-processes which led to the unfolding of that glorious era and the main intellectual, social and political features which characterised it.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* represents only one aspect—the idealistic-religious aspect—of Hindu culture. The claim that the poem contains a synthesis of all ancient Indian philosophies is not borne out by a critical study of the scripture. Moreover, it mostly ignores other aspects of Indian thought not liked by the author. If, and when, any opponent's views are referred to, they are distorted and presented in a way as to support the author's cherished assumptions. I have, therefore, deemed it necessary briefly to narrate, in the first part, the history of Indian thought from the early age, which makes it easier to grasp the underlying purpose of the *Gita* teachings.

Indian idealist philosophy has developed more from mysticism than common sense, and is generally beyond the comprehension of the average intelligent person. I have taken pains to summarise the main theories of the different idealist schools and reduce them to terms which I can understand, and which, I think, the reader also will be able to understand.

The argument that whereas the Hindus accepted the *Bhagavad-Gita* as their supreme scripture and unquestioned guide, they failed to act upto the ideals preached by Sri Krishna does not hold water. When members of a society apotheosize

a person they have the ambition to emulate him and to fashion their lives in accordance with the principles taught by him. They cease to do so only when the hero loses charm and fails to captivate. If there is agreement on the statement that the *Bhagavad-Gita* has been the most popular scripture of the Hindus for the past fifteen centuries, it is absurd to hold that the sufferings of the community have been caused not by the doctrines venerated by them but because they acted in defiance of those doctrines.

A dispassionate and objective study of the *Bhagavad-Gita* will show that despite the extravagant claims made on its behalf, it is not an unfailing guide to spiritual freedom or worldly advancement. It is true that the holy poem mentions some lofty ideals, puts forth a few sublime thoughts on different aspects of human culture and lays down certain noble precepts for success in mental discipline. But, on the whole, its teachings can help (and have helped) only to subvert human progress and nourish social evils. It is a philosophy of the upper classes meant to be utilised by them as a weapon for maintaining a frustrated society in some sort of stability and equilibrium by inculcating ideas of patience and contentment in disinherited, exploited and down-trodden millions.

Since its appearance the *Bhagavad-Gita* has been repeatedly invoked to fight against the forces of revolution. If Shankaracharya sought its assistance in the ninth century A.C. to deal a death blow to declining Buddhism, Mahatma Gandhi utilised its teachings to annihilate the rising tide of secular democracy. This is true even though Shankara was dubbed as a crypto-Buddhist and Gandhi acclaimed as the champion of democratic freedom.

Not only have the medley doctrines of the holy poem to be properly analysed by application of reason which is, after all, the one reliable criterion as well as the supreme court of authority, but we have also to see how Hindus fared in their personal lives and dealings among themselves and with others, after they came fully under the influence of the *Gita* philosophy. From day to day and year to year, for at least fifteen centuries, the venerated scripture has been powerfully exercising the mind of Hindus and making them think and function in a certain

manner, thus leading them towards particular ends. Therefore, the relevance between the divine teachings and the life lived by Hindus during this long period has to be brought out in bold relief in order to make history a profitable study.

The history of India written and taught in the past is the history as studied by Brahmin intellectuals. No efforts have been made to present the common man's viewpoint in it because it would have been ridiculed and fiercely opposed. When, for the first time, in the beginning of the present century, T.W. Rhys Davids made an attempt to describe the period during Buddhist ascendancy from the kshatriya (warrior caste) angle, he was afraid that "it would be regarded by some as a kind of lese majeste." His *Buddhist India*, however, has become a classic which shows that the time has come when we may interpret the entire Indian history from a non-Brahmin stand.

The change from the Brahmin stance to the common man's stand in the study of our past makes every event, development and person in Indian history look entirely different. Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) describing the consequences of a radical change in his outlook stated; "What had previously seemed to me good seemed evil, and what had seemed evil seemed good. It happened to me as it happens to a man who goes out on some business and on the way suddenly decides that the business is unnecessary and returns home. All that was on his right is now on his left, and all that was on his left is now on his right... . The direction of my life and my desires became different, and good and evil changed places."[3] While compiling this unconventional study of India's past I have had the same experience as the Russian sage.

Like some other advanced languages, Sanskrit can be very difficult and, indeed, many books, religious and secular, written in it are not easy to understand. The *Bhagavad-Gita*, happily, is composed in easily intelligible language; it abounds in poetic art; and its lucid style and musical sound add to its charm. Probably, apart from its religious merit, its linguistic beauty helped it to become so popular. The German Indologist, M. Winternitz, observes: "It is on the strength of its poetic value,

3. *Confessions*, p. 307.

the forcefulness of its language, the splendour of the images and metaphors, the breath of inspiration which pervades the poem, that it has made such a deep impression on the impressionable minds of all ages."[4] But the commentators have not infrequently projected their own notions and concepts into the verses of the poem. By doing so they have made the text mystifying and inexplicable. They have a purpose in doing so.

If studied without aids, while the main theme of the *Bhagavad-Gita* becomes manifest, its contradictions and inconsistencies can not remain concealed from an intelligent student. By giving far-fetched meaning to words and reading what is not given in the text, the commentators try to cover up the defects and establish the integrity of the author. Sanskrit is a rich language, and many words carry dozens of meanings which are sometimes opposed to each other. By taking advantage of the richness of language the commentators can interpret the poem as they like and, as a matter of fact, many of these works are full of the preconceived views and strongly cherished beliefs of the devoted *Gita*-lovers. While this device may strengthen orthodoxy and preserve the sanctity of the scripture, it can not help in estimating the historical importance of the poem and its contribution to Indian social life.

The *Bhagavad-Gita* has in the past played a great role in shaping the mind and character of Hindus and thereby in making the history of India. As long as the social conditions prevail which gave birth to *Gita* doctrines, the scripture will continue to play the same role and exercise a powerful influence. We can discover the nature of this role and its effectiveness by studying the sacred poem in an unbiased manner. The poem is entitled to highest respect which it deserves as the adored scripture of the millions of Indians. But regard for truth demands that we should rationally analyse the declarations made and the theories adumbrated in the holy poem. It will be strictly in accordance with our past cultural traditions. Besides, the findings thus arrived at alone can be conducive to the future welfare of the Indian society.

I was a lad of fourteen years when I first secured a copy of

4. *A History of Indian literature*, part-1, p. 430.

the *Bhagavad-Gita* with a simple translation by Mrs. Annie Besant. For the last fifty-three years I have carefully gone through scores of translations and commentaries which were available to me. I have had discussions with friendly scholars, both orthodox and liberal, on the philosophical and religious themes dealt with in the scripture. The conclusions set forth here are the outcome of these studies and discussions.

Being the first attempt to write a critical commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gita* after hundreds of books have been brought out by Indians and foreigners eulogizing it, some circles may regard my endeavour as presumptuous. It would be an unfair charge and by no means justifiable. As a free nation we need to develop in us the faculty to criticise not only others (in which we are lavish and specially adept) but also ourselves—our politics, our religion, our culture, our institutions and our traditions. We are woefully lacking in this and have therefore failed to develop on healthy lines and produce the expected results in various fields of social activity. To be thoroughly self-critical was a trait of intellectual thinking in the Upanishadic age. It has to be fostered again with the purpose of guiding India towards an intellectual revolution which is a *sine qua non* for long-needed social transformation. Self-criticism is the lever of progress.

In critically examining cherished beliefs, hoary traditions and age-old customs one cannot avoid treading on corns of orthodox scholar and religious-minded devotee. But the intention far from being to offend anyone is solely to arrive at the truth by sifting the grain from the chaff. In undertaking this arduous task I have drawn inspiration from the venerable *Upanishads*. In the *Taittiriya* the sage says; *ritam vadishyami Satyam vadishyami tanmamavato* (I will speak of the right; I will speak the truth; may that protect me). Following in the footsteps of the bold thinkers who proved to be the harbingers of the great revolution India has ever witnessed in its history, I venture to present this study in the hope that it might help in instilling a healthier outlook on life among the Indian people than the prevailing one laboriously nourished through the past ages by the Brahmins currently called Indian nationalists.

Acknowledgements

In collecting for over twenty years material for this work, I have sought assistance in one way or another of many friends interested in Indian culture and social life. It is not possible to acknowledge my debt of gratitude to them one by one. All the same, I must, even though anonymously, thank them all for the help they have generously rendered to me in different ways.

At the end of the book is given a select bibliography which contains a list of the more important publications that I have consulted and used in the preparation and completion of this study. It will be seen that many of these publications belong to the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan which is a renowned university founded and run by orthodox Hindu scholars who have also undertaken to issue books and periodicals on Indian history, politics, philosophy, religion, culture etc. Although I could have secured a mass of supporting material from other sources, I preferred to mostly rely on the literature produced by the Bhavan because in establishing the theories I have advanced in the book the information drawn from it would be convincing in the estimation of a discriminating reader than what has been said in the books written by others not in complete accord with orthodox viewpoint.

I have in particular frequently referred to the *History and Culture of the Indian People* published by the Vidya Bhavan in nine volumes. This monumental work is highly esteemed in Hindu nationalist circles has been approved by the Congress Government and is being translated in all regional languages with the object of introducing it as a text book in educational institutions. It was, therefore, desirable that I should mainly depend on these volumes for the historical material which I needed for my study.

For having drawn rather heavily on their publications I owe a deep debt of obligation to the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. I am

also thankful to many other authors, old and contemporary from whose books I have taken excerpts and who are listed in the bibliography.

Among the friends referred to above I should reckon myself ungrateful if I do not say how much beholden I am to M.R.A. Baig, V.R. Narla and R.L. Nigam for reading through the manuscript, and for their incisive criticism, corrections and encouragement. I have no doubt that the many suggestions which they made have been helpful and added to the value of the book. Although all of them have kindly made apprecia-tive remarks about my approach to Indian culture, history, religion and politics I think that, in faireness to them, I should make it clear that the responsibility for the views expressed in the book is entirely mine. None of them should be taken to be in agreement with everything that has been stated by me in the book.

Lastly, I must thank Miss M.K. Annamma and Miss S. Batra who typed and retyped the manuscript or parts of it, with care and alacrity enabling me to get it ready for publica-tion early.

Prem Nath Bazaz

Contents

PART ONE

The Rise and Decline of Indian Philosophy

1

The Quest for Knowledge

THE vast land mass, known as India, was inhabited by homo sapiens from time immemorial. Even before 3000 B.C., when Indo-Aryans began to migrate from abroad and enter the sub-continent through mountainous passes on the north-west, the country was peopled by the curly-haired ancestors of the dark skinned Dravidians, mostly in the southern peninsula. On the basis of geological antiquity and the favourable climatic conditions on the eastern coast of South India, a view is held that the Early Man in India originated there and migrated towards the Punjab at the close of the First Ice Age. De Terra has stated, on the basis of extensive investigations, that Early Man went to the north with his hand-axe industry from the south.[1]

The two earliest Indian civilisations known to history flourished in the lower Indus Valley (Mohenjo-daro) and upper Indus Valley (Harrapa). "On a careful consideration of all available material", writes A.D. Pusalker, "for the age of the Indus civilisation, it appears that the main culture period at Mohenjo-daro or the "Harrapa Culture" ranged between 2800-2500 B. C."[2] Although the originators of these civilisations are reported to be Dravidians by certain research scholars, the statement lacks verification. But this much is certain that though an element of Indo-Aryans was mixed up with the population of the Indus Valley, when it prospered the majority of the inhabitants was non-Aryan. "Sir John Marshall

has compared the Vedic civilisation with that of the Indus Valley and has found that they are quite distinct, and as the entry of the Aryans into India, according to his view of the date of the *Rigveda*, is subsequent to 1500 B. C. more than a thousand years after the last vestige of the Indus Valley civilisation disappeared, he cannot think of the Aryans in connection with the Indus Valley civilisation."[3]

The chief characteristics of the early Indus Valley culture were those of a developed city life, worship of a mother goddess and a prototype male god like Shiva. The people of this culture also venerated the bull and worshipped icons. On the other hand, the Aryans were nomads and a pastoral people who tended cattle and gave the place of honour to such deities as Indra, Surya, Agni, Varuna, Mitra and Nasatyas (morning and evening stars). These supernal beings were not known to the propounders of the early Indus culture ; they are later creations born of the imagination of the Aryan poets.

By the beginning of second millennium B. C., the Aryans had entered North India in large numbers and had subdued the local inhabitants. Before they had finally settled down in the Sind Valley and the Gangetic Plain, they had developed a rich literature reflecting their social life, which was handed down by oral transmission as writing was unknown in that period of Indian history. The literature was in the form of utterances and sayings of sages and poets or observations made by venerable seers from time to time. Because they had not been reduced to writing and were passed on orally from generation to generation, they came to be called *sruti* (what is heard). Near about 1500 B. C., when the Aryans succeeded in founding settlements, the *srutis* were compiled and arranged in four volumes—*Rig, Sam, Yajur* and *Atharva*—called the *Vedas* (knowledge). The word *Veda* is derived from the Sanskrit root *vid* (to know). The *Vedas* are also called the *samhitas* (collections).

The four *Vedas* are only a part of the vast literature produced by the Indo-Aryans. Every *Veda* was followed by *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas* and *Upanishads*, the last being also called *Vedanta* (end of knowledge). In All, this literature consists of 20,389 *mantras* (verses). It may, however, be noted that some

mantras have been repeated in the different *Vedas*. The *Vedas* are considered as the source books of ancient Indian wisdom.

The *Vedas* are in the form of poetry except for some passages written in rhythmic prose. The first and the oldest of the four collections is the *Rig Veda* consisting of 10552 hymns composed over a long period of several centuries. It indicates the Aryan outlook on life as also the evolution of Indian thought during the early times. The *Sama Veda*, next in importance, has 1875 mantras mostly consisting of melodies. The *Yajur Veda* (1975 mantras) deals with formulas employed in religious sacrifices, and the last of the samhitas—the *Atharva Veda*—with 5987 mantras contains, for the most part, magic incantations for all manner of things, even for doing away with one's supposed or real enemies. None but the *Rig Veda* is of any philosophical significance.

The *Vedas* have no doubt been, as we shall see, the source of later philosophies and religious rituals of the Indians but, taken collectively and assessed impartially, they are, by and large, no better than half-formed myths and immature compositions. The *Sama Veda* and the *Yajur Veda* are nothing more than prayer books for the practical use of the priests. These two samhitas have been compiled strictly from the point of view of their use at the sacrifices. The *Samavidhana Brahmana*, a ritual compendium, belonging to the *Sama Veda*, is a regular handbook of sorcery which teaches how certain *samans* (melodies) can be employed for magic purposes. The *Yajur Veda* has two parts : White *Yajur Veda* and Black *Yajur Veda*, the former is considered clear and well-arranged because it draws distinction between sacrificial utterances and explanations of rituals, but the latter is unarranged and haphazard. The spells of the *Yajur Veda* called formulas are a meaningless conglomeration of ideas. As a matter of fact, they were not composed to make any sense, being conceived as spells and calculated to force the gods to fulfill the wishes of the sacrificer.

There is no part of social life for which a charm, an amulet, or an incantation is not prescribed in the *Atharva Veda*. These, were the only weapons the primitive man could forge to fight his enemies like diseases and the vagaries of nature. According to it, the diseases are caused by *gandharvas* (heavenly beings),

apsaras (celestial nymphs), *pishachas* (goblins) and *rakshasas* (demons). The *Atharva Veda* consists solely of incantations, spells, benedictions and liturgies besides obscene songs and coarse jokes. The main purpose of the *Atharva Veda* is to appease, to bless or to curse. *Atharva* means "holy magic" which brings happiness and, in contrast to it, *angiras* denotes "hostile magic" ; both form part of the *Atharva Veda.*

M. Winternitz, an eminent German orientalist, evaluating the contents of the *Atharva Veda,* observes: "Indeed many of the magic songs, like the magic rites pertaining to them, belong to a sphere of conceptions which spread over the whole earth, ever recur with the most surprising similarity in the most varying people of all countries. Among the Indians of North America, among the Negro races of Africa, among the Malayas and Mongols, among the ancient Greeks and the Romans, and frequently still among the peasantry of present day Europe, we find again exactly the same views, exactly the same leaps of thought in the magic songs and magic rites, as have come down to us in the *Atharva Veda* of the ancient Indians."[4]

Since the *Atharva Veda* deals solely with magic towards which the intellectual classes even in those far off days of Indian civilisation were not favourably disposed, it was neither recognised as part of true knowledge nor included in Vedas for many centuries. However, its place in the ancient literature cannot be underestimated. "The great importance of the *Atharva Veda Samhita*", points out Winternitz, "lies in the very fact that it is an invaluable source of knowledge of the real popular belief as it is uninfluenced by the priestly religion of the faith in numberless spirits, imps, ghosts and demons of every kind and of the witchcraft so eminently important for ethnology and for the history of religion."[5]

It is not fair to compare the Vedas with the modern philosophical knowledge. If we keep in mind the period of history in which they were composed their significance and importance cannot be underestimated. "What renders these hymns so valuable for us is that we see before us in them a mythology in the making ; we see gods as if arising before our own eyes."[6] The Vedas are a comprehensive record of the earliest Indian society trying to understand the nature and its phenomena and

with the knowledge thus acquired going ahead with the purpose of living a happy, prosperous life.

To come out successful in the struggle for survival, sub-human species had to adapt themselves to the physical environment in which they lived ; those who failed to do so became extinct. With the evolution of human organism, the struggle for existence had to be carried on a higher level of intelligence. Instead of adapting himself to the environment, man tries to dominate the forces of nature and use them for his own progress and happiness. That aim, however, can be achieved only by acquiring knowledge about the diverse phenomena of nature. Man must discover their causes and the laws governing them. The first lesson in this study is to ascribe the different phenomena to a variety of gods. Man creates the gods in his own image ; they are quite like him but more powerful than he ; for that reason they can produce and control the incomprehensible phenomena. Therefore, the gods are to be propitiated, cajoled, persuaded with blandishments so that they may be induced to function for the benefit of man and human society. This is natural religion in its primitive form. The hymns of the four Vedas, particularly the *Rig Veda*, make it abundantly clear that the early Aryans evolved such a religious philosophy and were guided by its doctrines.

The Indo-Aryans had created several gods which are frequently mentioned in the Vedas. Indra, the most powerful of them all, was the ideal hero. He was the highest deity and the model (*pratimana*) for the whole world.[7] Describing his might *Rig Veda* (*RV*) says :

> He bends not to the strong nor to the firm
> nor to the dying foe, instigated by the lawless,
> for Indra lofty mountains are as plains
> and in the deeps there is a food for him.[8]

Other important Vedic gods are Prithvi, Agni, Soma, Brihaspati, Rudra, Vayu-Vata, Apah, Parjnya, Mitra, Varuna, Surya, Savitri, Pushan, Adityas, Ushas and Ashvins, all personifying different forces or elements in Nature. There are personified demons too representing evil, who stand in the way of progress. The blackest of them all is Vritra (the Obstructor) who holds

up waters on which depended life of the Aryans. He is killed by Indra.

Everyone of the gods was supreme in his own right. Prayers were offered to the gods not only for wealth and wordly prosperity but also to obtain intellectual power (*dhi*), wisdom (*kratu*), efficiency (*daksha*), spiritual vigour (*varcha*) and high talent (*medha*) :

> O god, bestow on us the best treasures,
> the efficient mind, and spiritual lustre
> the increase of wealth, the health of bodies
> the sweetness of speech and the fairness of days.[9]
> Earth, ether, sky
> may we be rich in offspring
> rich in heroes, rich in nourishing food.[10]
> May we, for a hundred autmns, see
> that lustrous eye—god ordained—arise before us,
> may we live a hundred autmns;
> may we hear for a hundred autmns;
> may we speak well for a hundred autmns;
> may we hold our heads high for a hundred autmns;
> yea, even beyond a hundred autmns.[11]
> Give sight to our eyes;
> sight to our bodies so that we can see;
> may we see the world as a whole,
> may we also see it in detail.[12]
> May I have voice in my mouth, breath in my nostrils;
> sight in my eyes, hearing in my ears,
> hair that has not turned grey, teeth that have not decayed;
> great strength in my arm,
> may I have power in my thighs, swiftness in my legs,
> steadfastness in my feet;
> may all my limbs be uninjured and my soul unimpaired.[13]
> Verily a hundred years lie before us, gods,
> within which you cause decay of our bodies,
> within which the sons become fathers;
> do not break in the middle the course of our fleeing life.[14]
> O god, may we be ever youthful in thy friendship.[15]
> May the four regions bow before me.[16]
> In the friendship of thee, the valiant,
> we shall neither fear nor tire.[17]
> Powerful Lord, give manliness to our bodies
> and ever-conquering valour.[18]
> Bestow on us the brightest efficiency (*daksha*).[19]
> Arouse our intelligence.[20]
> O Varuna, sharpen the intelligence (*dhi*),

wisdom (*kratu*) and insight of him
who is striving for enlightenment.[21]
O Agni, make us shine brightly like
fire produced by friction.[22]

Failure of the monsoon and consequent draughts were in ancient times in India, as today, not uncommon. Water has, therefore, received special attention in the Vedic hymns :

Waters, friends of men, in peace and in trouble
give your blessings to our sons and grandsons,
for you are the most motherly physicians,
the mother of all that stands and all that moves.[23]
Indra flooded with water the desert and thirsty plains
and milked the dry cows that had a mighty master.[24]

Though the ancient Aryans considered the gods as equals, yet they were believed to possess extraordinary powers ; hence the need of help from them to solve the day to day problems. It is for the good of man and his tribe that the gods are strong and should grow stronger :

Years do not age him ; nor months nor days
wear out Indra ;
may his self grow, though ever so mighty,
glorified by songs of praise and hymns of prayer.[25]
If Indra, a hundred heavens were thine,
and even a hundred earths,
no, not even a thousand sons, O thunderer,
could match thee, manifested, nor both the worlds.[26]

The Vedic gods were conceived, at any rate in the beginning, as friendly fellow-beings by the Aryans. They were expected to come and enjoy the pleasures of life on earth among men. Being gifted with immense power they would make men strong who would then be able to dominate nature and face its vagaries :

Verily the gods are of one spirit with man
all common possessors of graces.[27]
O god, having received the friendship
of thee, the valiant,
we will neither fear nor feel weary.[28]
Thou art the fiery spirit, give me the fiery spirit,
thou art the manly vigour, give me manly vigour
thou art power, give me power
thou art energy, give me energy.
thou art battle fury, give me battle fury,

thou art conquering might, give me conquering might.[29]
We will bring these existing worlds into subjection
with Indra and all gods to aid us.[30]

Indra, though a god, is invoked as a human being: "I invoke Indra, the man (*naram*), who fulfills the desires of many from his ancient dwellings, in the same manner as my ancestors did in the past."[31] Indra is praised as the chief among men (*nritamah*) and one who shares out (*vibhakta*) wealth along with other human beings (*nribhih sakhaih*). This epithet of being the chief among men is frequently used. He is also the finest among all human beings (*nrinam nritamah*).[32] The gods, Mitra and Varuna, are invoked to come and join the soma-drinking (*soma* is a favourite beverage) in the company of human beings.[33] As the chief of men, Indra, rends asunder the clouds and causes showers to benefit society.[34] He speaks like human beings (*nrivat vadan*) and "comes to us and gives us food."[35] The *yajamanas* (performers of the ritual) are asked to offer cakes to Indra who is believed to be present in the gathering and is the bravest of human beings (*nrinam viratamaya*).[36] The prayers to the gods for fulfilment of different wants are also made considering them as powerful human beings. "May Indra and Vishnu like human beings give us house to live in."[37] "With all these evidences", observes Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, "it is safe to presume that Indra was originally only the culture-hero of some Vedic tribe eventually raised to the status of a deity... The more we penetrate into the pre-history of the Vedic people, the clearer do we see their gods to be outspokenly human and maintaining a comradely relationship with the members of the tribe."[38] The gods were conceived as men possessing great powers, huge wealth and vast waters.

Even the god of death is friendly and strikes no terror in the heart of the Aryans: "As we men, O Aditya, have death for our comrade may you lengthen our days on earth, so that we may live."[39] Twice in the *Rig Veda* man has been called *mrityabhandhu* (relation of death) who willingly gives back, when life terminates, to the elements what he has taken from them:

Do not burn him, Agni, do not scorch him either,
do not tear asunder his skin or body,

when you have devoured him, O Jatavedas,
then do you send him on to the fathers;
let the eye go to the sun, let the breath go to the wind,
to heaven or to earth according to their desert.
Or to waters go, if that is your lot,
or set you up in the plants with your limbs.[40]

To achieve their chosen aims, the Aryans did not entirely depend on the gods. In their estimation self-dedication and self-effort were as essential to obtain virtues and arrive at the truth as propitiation of the gods :

By self-dedication one obtains consecration ;
by consecration one obtains grace ;
by grace one obtains reverence, and by reverence
is truth obtained.[41]

The Aryans had a strong tribal sense of unity. One should not live for oneself alone but should endeavour to progress in cooperation with others :

Assemble, speak in harmony,
may your friends be of one accord,
your prayer be common,
your assembly be common,
common your mind, united your thoughts.
I counsel you to common purpose
and I worship with your common oblation.[42]

Those opposed to the tribal unity and the common aim of subjugating the forces of nature were to be left to their fate ; for the tribe would not lag behind because of their sluggishness :

The stream, filled with stones, flows on,
move together,
stand erect and cross over, my friends,
here let us leave those who are opposed to good
and let us cross over to powers that are beneficient.[43]

The ancient Aryans desired to live long, active and full life, enjoy the available blessings of nature and, significantly, were least concerned with the here-after. They entertained not the faintest idea of the next world nor did they believe in rebirth. "Of the dismal belief in the transmigration of soul", remarks Winternitz, "and eternal rebirth—the belief which controls the

whole philosophical thought of Indians in later centuries—there is in the *Rig Veda*, as yet no trace to be found."[44] *Ayam lokah priyatamah* (this world is most beloved of all), declares the *Atharva Veda*.[45]

The Aryans prayed for happiness here and now :

> Make us today (*adya*) enjoyers of wide room and happiness,
> may we be master of felicity now (*idanim*).[46]
> May the air blow his balm
> carrying joy and health to our hearts,
> may we prolong our lives.[47]
> Food is soul, the apparel is the body
> and the unguent is the giver of spiritual vigour.[48]

Summing up his findings on the religion and philosophy of Vedic Aryans, V.M. Apte says : "But the joys and the pleasures of this world interest them deeply. Thus the *Rig Veda* is full of prayers for long life, freedom from disease, heroic progeny, wealth, power, abundance of food and drink, the defeat of rivals etc. There is no trace of pessimism in the thought of the Rig Vedic sages. Whether life was a reality or illusion, substance or shadow, they want to enjoy it to the full."[49] Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the recognised authority on Hindu idealist philosophy, has to admit : "But the dominant note (of the Vedic seers) is not one of asceticism. In the hymns (of the *Rig Veda*) we find a keen delight in the beauties of nature, its greatness, its splendour and its pathos. The motive of the sacrifices is the love of the good things of the world. We have yet the deep joy in life and the world untainted by any melancholy gloom."[50]

As with the passage of time minds matured, the Aryans who believed everyone of their gods to be unrivalled and possessing supreme power, began to discern a unity underlying the pantheon :

> They speak of Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni,
> and there are the divine Suparna and Garutmat.
> The wise call the one being by many names,
> as Agni, Yama, Matrishavan.[51]

Again :

Agni is that, Aditya is that, Vayu is that,
Chandramas is that, light is that, Brahman is that,
Apah (waters) are those and Prajapati is He.[52]

It took the *Rig Veda* many centuries to acquire the final shape which it assumed in about 1500 B.C. Its earlier hymns are different in outlook on life from those composed later. Maturer Vedic hymns represent a transition from polytheism to monotheism and there is evidence which goes to show that the ancient seers had been veered round to the idea of monism. Its seeds can be detected in the "Song of Creation" which pronounces that in the beginning "neither death nor deathlessness existed ; of day and night there was no distinction. That one alone breathed calmly self-supported, other than it was none, nor aught above it."[53]

Thus in course of time the natural religion of the Vedic Aryans became both polytheistic and monotheistic in complexion. It contemplated the existence of many gods but asserted that each one of them was supreme and that the same eternal truth was hidden behind them all. The German scholar, Friedrich Maximilian Mueller, popularly known as Max Mueller (1823-1900), coined a new name, Henotheism, for this cult where divinity is seen as the one in many and the many in one.

The Vedic Aryans had above everything else an abiding faith in *Rita* (the Eternal Law) which moved the world and produced the cosmic order or symmetry that underlies beauty so mainfest in Nature itself. Orderly and consistent conduct is the essential feature of good life. Virtue is conformity to *Rita*. As opposed to it *anrita* (falsehood) or disorder is the greatest evil. The conception of *dharma* (sacred law) developed in subsequent ages originally sprung from *Rita*. In concrete form *Rita* took the shape of love of fellow human beings, kindness to living creatures, fulfilment of one's social duties and obedience to the gods.

The Aryans believed that for one who lives according to the Eternal Law "the winds are full of sweetness, the rivers pour sweets, plants emit sweetness, sweet is the night and sweet the dawn, sweet the dust of the earth."[54]

To understand and follow the *Rita* the Aryans prayed : "Let noble thoughts come to us from every side."[55] The Vedic Aryans, at any rate in the earlier centuries, knew no distinctions amongst themselves ; they were all equal. If there existed any differences they were based on the acceptance of the *Rita* or opposition to it. The *dasas* or *dasyus* were subjugated people or those outside the Aryan fold. They were *rita*-less (*a-karman*), indifferent to the gods (*a-devayu*), without devotion (*a-brahman*), not sacrificing (*a-yajvan*), lawless (*a-vrata*), following strange ordinances (*anuavrata*), reviling the gods (*deva-piya*) etc. References are made to *asuras* as enemies of Vedic people and their gods. The *rakshsas* and *pishachas* are also human elements but outside the Aryan fold. Collectively, they are opponents of the *Rita*. "The man of faith is generally one who has understood and accepted the Eternal Law." As regards the rest A.C. Bose says that "the atheist is one who does not believe in the general values and does not stand for goodness and oppose evil according to the Eternal Law. Vritra whom Indra destroys is the power of darkness and evil, who obstructs the working of *rita*. The *dasa* and *dasyu* are followers of evil law and inhuman (*anyavrata*, *amanushya*)."[56]

That the Indo-Aryans were materialists, that is interested in their physical welfare and enjoyment of life and not in the so-called spiritual elevation, is abundantly clear from the hymns of the older parts of the *Rig Veda* in which the gods are invoked solely to secure the necessities of life and not for any other-worldly purpose. "The Vedic songs were also called *kamavarshi*, the showerers of desire", says D.P. Chattopadhyaya. "And what was the nature of these desires ? The desire for food, wealth, cattle, children, strength and safety. It was never the desire for liberation or *moksha*. This word, signifying the highest ideal for the later champions of the Vedas, was in fact unknown to the Vedic people."[57]

A Vedic scholar, Sayana, has translated *brahmanaspati* as one that nourishes the activity of food production. An ancient text *Nighantu* suggests that the word *brahma* was one of the synonyms for *anna* or food. "This alone", observes Chattopadhyaya, "lays bare the materialistic conception of the

Vedic gods. It also shows how far removed from the Vedas was the idealistic outlook of the *Upanishads* in which *Brahman* meant the ultimate reality as pure consciousness."[58] He adds : "The Vedic people did not know of any song that was not a showerer of desire and they did not know of any desire that was not positively material. And if their desires were so thoroughly this-wordly, it would be wrong to attribute to them any other-worldly or spiritualistic world-outlook on the precarious evidence of extremely doubtful interpretation of a few fragments of such a compilation of their songs... It would be a rare feat indeed if a single *rik* (hymn) of the genuinely earlier portions of the *Rig Veda* can be made to reveal the ideal of *moksha* or final liberation as inspiring the early Vedic poets."[59]

Reference has already been made to the conception of man being no other than his body and at the time of death getting dissloved into different elements of nature. There are many hymns in the *Rig Veda* conveying the same idea. There is no rebirth, no migration of soul, no heaven and no world excepting this one.

The earlier Indo-Aryans were a pastoral, nomadic people tending cattle and gathering food ; they knew next to nothing about agriculture. It was the simple everyday desires of such people that inspired the older songs of *Rig Veda*. The various gods were the embodiments of such desires. The invocations were generally insistent requests to lead the people to fulfilment of the desires.

But the materialism of the Rigvedic Aryans is primitive and instinctive ; it does not deal with any flights of high philosophy ; it is proto-materialism and cannot be compared with the scientific materialism of modern times. Vedic materialism was born of simple observances and experiences of unsophisticated people made by them in every day life. It is an expression of desire for food, drink and other necessities required for nourishment of the body. As pointed out by Laxman Shastri Joshi "it is an indication of the primitive, simple, undeveloped mind, for the idea of causation in it is based on complete ignorance of real causal relationship. As compared to this Vedic natural religion, the other-wordly or

spiritualistic religion definitely suggests a higher stage of development."[60]

It took some hundred years for all the hymns found in the *Rig Veda* to be composed. It is in the later hymns that we find indications of notions like deity, soul, rebirth, caste system and *moksha* which ultimately paved the way for the emergence of religion as we know it today. And with it also rose anti-religious forces like sceptics, atheists and non-believers who challenged the existence of gods, soul and other world.

The beginning of doubt in religious beliefs is hinted at by the hymns raising questions like "Of whom they ask ? 'Where is He ?", of him indeed they also say 'He is not."[61]

A sage who believes, yet believes not, observes : "Desiring strength bring forward a hymn of praise, a truthful hymn to Indra, if truly he exists ; 'there is no Indra' some have said, 'who has seen him' ? Why then shall we adore ?"[62]

But the confirmed believer answers :

> I exist, O singer, look upon me here
> all that exists I surpass in splendour
> the eternal laws, commandments make me mighty,
> when I rend, I rend asunder the world.[63]

The core of Vedic scepticism is best expressed in the tenth book of the *Rig Veda* in the "Hymn of Creation" referred to above. "It is sophisticated and philosophical", says A.C. Bouquet, "and belongs to a stage of transition in religious thought far removed from that of early hymns. Indeed, it questions the status of the Vedic gods, and asks who is the real creator, finally concluding that the gods themselves are not ultimate, but perhaps themselves the products of some mysterious Self-Existent Cosmic Being."[64]

The wavering Vedic seer asks and then affirms :

> Who verily knows and who can here declare it,
> whence it was born and whence comes this creation ?
> the gods are later than this world's production.
> Who knows, then, whence it first came into being ?
> he, the first origin of this creation,
> whether he formed it all or did not form it
> whose eye controls this world in highest-heaven,
> He verily knows it, *Or perhaps He knows it not*.[65]

Another matter of importance about the ancient Aryan society that invites attention is the status of women. Although in the Vedic pantheon are included some goddesses like Prithvi, Aditi, Saraswati and Ushas, it is the male element that predominates. Nevertheless, the tender regard for womanhood is one of the marked characteristics of Vedic literature. The women are respected and honoured. Like a goddess, a woman is addressed as *subhaga* (the graceful one) and *kalyani* (the blissful one).

There are references to premarital love between the lover and the beloved. Widow could remarry if she so willed, at any rate in the early times, though in later periods objections were raised against the practice. The *Atharva Veda* clearly mentions the occurrence of remarriage of a widow after the loss of her first husband. There were sages who strongly supported widows wishing to remarry according to their choice :

> Go up, O woman, to the world of life ;
> come you are lying by one who is lifeless ;
> you have entered into the relationship of wife
> to husband of him who takes your hand and woos you.
> The bow I have taken from the hands of the dead
> so that it may bring us valour, brilliance and strength
> Here you are and here may we with heroes triumph
> over all who challenge us and fight against us.[66]

A childless widow was permitted to cohabit with her brother-in-law until the birth of a son.[67]

In the concluding period of the Vedic Age the evil custom of *sati* (burning of a widow with the dead body of her husband) seems to have started as there are vague references to it in both the *Rig Veda*[68] and the *Atharva Veda*.[69] But most probably the rite was not prevalent and only in a subsequent period at the decline of the woman's status, spread to many parts of the country.

By copious references to Sanskrit texts, Radha Kumad Mookerji has shown that even in the Vedic Age there was a conception of the unity of India in the Aryan mind. The oldest expression of this unity, according to him, is the name *Bharatavarsha* given by the Aryans to the subcontinent. The lists of holy places mentioned in the Vedic literature show

complete familiarity with every part of the country. The geographic horizon in the Vedic times and the extension of the limits of India in *Aitareya Brahmana* corroborate this. "Thus has India been helped", concludes Mookerji, "both by nature and nurture, by her geographical conditions and historic experience, by her religious ideas and political ideals to realise herself as a unit, to perceive, preserve and promote her individuality in fulfilment of her heaven-appointed mission in the culture-history of the world."[70]

But the political unification of the Indian subcontinent partially achieved under the rule of the Mauriyas and the Mughals remained an unrealisable dream until the nineteenth century when the British conquered the entire subcontinent and established a strong central administration.

An unbiased study of Vedic literature enables us to probe into the minds of the ancient Indo-Aryan sages and understand the nature of the society which they had been able to found in North India ; it reveals their strength and weakness, virtues and foibles, noble ideals and crude fantasies, successes and failures and, above all, their quest for knowledge.

There is a marked tendency amongst a class of writers to idealise Vedic culture, to exaggerate its achievements and underrate its shortcomings. The Vedic society is presented as the most advanced and the one fit to be emulated even today. That orthodox Hindus should hold such puerile views would cause little surprise. But besides many Hindu savants, even some reputed Western scholars have failed objectively to estimate the ancient Indian civilisation. This has occasioned much harm and prevented a rational and critical outlook to grow in Indian society. "We must not form too exalted an idea of the moral conditions in ancient India", advises Winternitz, "and not picture these to ourselves in such an idyllic manner as certainly Max Mueller has at times done. We hear in the hymns of *Rig Veda* of incest, seduction, conjugal unfaithfulness, procuring of aboration as also deception, theft and robbery."[71]

Despite some flights of fertile imagination of the Vedic seers the knowledge achieved is not of high order by modern philosophical standard. It is mostly, though understandably,

primitive. "Those (Vedic) beliefs", comments T.W. Rhys Davids, "seem to us, and indeed are, so bizzare and absurd, that it is hard to accept the proposition that they give expression to an advanced stage of thought."[72]

It is, however, as already observed, not fair to judge the Vedas by modern standard. Four thousand years ago the human mind could not have soared higher. It was an achievement indeed to have discovered the fundamental principles, in however rudimentary a form, of diverse elements of knowledge which subsequently became the basis on which were raised the structures of different schools of Indian philosophy, both materialistic and idealistic, orthodox and heretical, reactionary and revolutionary, in the following ages. Even some of those thinkers who disowned the Vedas derived to a considerable extent, inspiration from the hymns of the *Rig Veda* and elaborated on them to found their own systems.

Nevertheless, it is well to remember that the achievements of the Vedic seers and sages were in no way unique in the history of human culture. Some other primitive societies which in point of time preceded or followed the Indo-Aryans have produced more or less similar poetry containing ideas and conceptions like those of the Vedic people. Adoption of natural religion with emphasis on material prosperity, creation of gods in their own image, worship of deities symbolizing forces of nature and transition from polytheism to monotheism has not been peculiar to ancient Indian society. The Summerian prayer hymns (c.2200 B.C.), the Babylonian penitential songs (c. 2500 B.C.), Egyptian temple literature (first half of third millennium B.C.), the Chinese sacrificial hymns and the Greek prayers to gods (c. 800 B.C.) are the outcome of the same quest for knowledge which activated Indo-Aryan mind and contain similar outpourings—immature, meaningless and childish—with occasional flashes of wisdom. The famous Greek philosopher, Xenophanes, called the attempts of his countrymen as "men making gods in the likeness of themselves". In India also the gods were made in the same fashion but never unmade subsequently as was done in other advancing societies. We shall discuss how and why this happened blocking further progress of the Indian society for many

centuries till the present day. The point to be made here is that the contemporary Hindus have no reason to feel vainglorious about the achievements, whatever they be, of the Vedic Aryans nor is there any basis for the belief that the Vedic culture excels other ancient cultures or possesses something unique or peculiar to teach the world.

2

Sacerdotal Supremacy

AS long as the Vedic gods were human beings, albeit more powerful and wealthy than the rest of the people, they could be directly and personally approached with request to fulfil wants and succour those in need of help. As we have seen the hymns addressed to the gods generally take them to be friends, colleagues, fellow-men partaking common joys and sharing food and drink. Being mighty and resourceful and endowed with wisdom and talent they are sought after at times of hardship and distress ; the expectations are not belied and usually the requests are granted, the desires fulfilled.

Whether the Vedic gods were the elders of the tribe who had gained prestige, power and wealth after the Indo-Aryans had established settlements at different places in the Gangetic plains or whether they were mere phantasies to induce primitive people to work by invoking the assistance of imaginary powerful beings, the fact remains that for many centuries the gods continued to be looked upon as creatures belonging to this earth, like all common men.

But gradually the position changed and the gods were transformed into heavenly deities ; they could neither be seen nor approached directly and personally by ordinary people. They however, continued to be cast in man's own image and, being human, shared the human weakness of being susceptible to flattery and appeased by gifts. By offering prayers and

oblations it was hoped and expected that the gods could be pleased so that the natural phenomena under their control were directed in a way as to benefit the people. The question arose who would carry the offerings from the earth to the gods in heaven. For this purpose a class of priests, qualified and able to undertake this task, came into being. The priests are specially gifted men who understand the mysterious ways of the gods so as to make the offerings and sacrifices acceptable to them. The fire with its towering flames and ever-rising smoke, already deified as Agni, became the bearer of oblational offerings from men to gods. The Indian priests called *Brahmins* built an elaborate system of rituals and ceremonies on the basis of fairy tales and nursery stories about the denizens of heaven. "In the theosophy of the Brahmins", observes A.B. Keith, "it is an accepted fact that the sacrifice has a magic power of its own, and that it brings about the effects at which it aims with absolute independence."[1]

As the intermediary between the helpless man and the powerful gods, the Brahmin acquired a dominating position in ancient Indian society. When the sacrifice became the only power that counts and could bend even the gods to the will of the sacrificer, substantial change was effected in the status of the old Rig Vedic gods. Some of them either disappeared or were retained only in name. Dyaus, Mitra and Savitri, Pushas, the Adityas, the Ashvins and Martus, Aditi and Diti and Urvashi and many more find no place and no use in the new situation, and depart. They survive only within the enclosures of the Vedic schools, the people know them no longer. Rudra is raised to be the *Mahadeva* (Great God) and receives the appellation of *Shiva* (the Auspicious One). He appears at the sacrifice in black dress and claims the sacrificial victim. Next to Rudra comes Vishnu, constantly identified with the all-important sacrifice and therefore rising above others in status. Gandharvas, Apsarasas, Nagas etc., also attain a semi-divine rank.

The Brahmins did not function as messengers or intermediaries between the gods and men for nothing and without any selfish end. They had to be paid for their work. The Vedic literature is full of praises for payments made to the priests

as remuneration for presiding over the sacrifices ; the payment may be in kind or cash. The hymns called *danstutis* (psalms in praise of munificence) record these and are generally unedifying. Even *Rig Veda* has them. The Brahmins receive payments in cash and kind; they enrich themselves as well as their kinsmen :

> A hundred gold pieces from the fame-seeking king together with a hundred horses as a present have I received. I, Kakshivant, obtained also a hundred cows from my master, who exalted thereby his fame immortal upto heaven. Dark horses given by Svanaya, and ten chariots carrying slave-girls fell to my share ; followed a herd of sixty thousand cows, all this as sacrificial fee did Kakshivant receive at the end of session. Forty ruddy horses of the set of ten chariots are heading the column of a thousand cows, fiery steeds decorated with pearls have the Kakshivants and Pajras received. After the first gift, I received three chariots and eight cows capable of nourishing even a rich patron for you, my good relations, who as clan-fellows, driving in chariots, hankered for fame.[2]

Discussing the topic of *yajna* (sacrifice) and the priestly demands, Hopkins remarks : "As to the fees the rules are precise, and the propounders of them are unblushing. The priest performs the sacrifice for the fee alone, and it must consist of valuable garments, kine, horses and gold ; when each is to be given is carefully stated. Gold is coveted most for this is immortality, the seed of Agni, and therefore peculiarly agreeable to the pious priest."[3]

The best of all *yajnas* is *Sarvamedha* or "All Sacrifice" described in the *Yajur Veda* (section 32 to 34) which ends with the sacrificer abandoning his entire possessions, presenting the same to a Brahmin priest as *dakshina* (sacrificial fee) and then retiring to the forest to become a hermit.

It was not only at the performance of a sacrifice that a Brahmin had to be paid ; he had to be pleased with offerings at every social function particularly the one to which even a slight objection could be raised. In the *Atharva Veda* we read :

> "The woman who having had a former husband, thereafter gets another later on ;
> she and her (new) husband—these two ;

> if they give five rice-dishes and a goat (to the god)
> will not be separated.[4]

The offerings at the sacrifices to be made to the gods in heaven, actually became the property of the Brahmins. Thus in the primitive Indian society the bulk of the surplus product, that is whatever was produced over and above the barest necessities of the producers of commodities, was appropriated by the Brahmins. Thus the first privileged class in the Indian society came into being to promote and preserve culture.

In this study of development of Indian society from early times to the present day, we shall have to say a lot deploring and denouncing the anti-progressive and vicious role played by the Brahmins throughout history, but let it not be forgotten that for at least a few centuries in the Vedic period they were the champions of freedom and culture. It was the amazing feat of the Brahmins to memorize the many thousands of Vedic hymns, transmit them orally from generation to generation and in fulness of time compile them into four samhitas—a feat unparalleled in the literatures of the world. If today scholars can trace the beginnings of cultural, historical and social life of the Indian people from the third millennium B.C. onwards, thanks are due to the Brahmins for having preserved the sayings of the ancient sages and seers in the four Vedas. In however a rudimentary form, different sciences such as cosmogony, cosmology, besides mythology and sociology were the discovery of the Brahmins. They were the first lawgivers and teachers who taught lessons on statecraft. In fact, the ancient civilisation of North India and the Gangetic plains from which Hindu society has inherited not a little is wholly indebted to the Brahmins. It is not therefore surprising that all classes of Vedic Aryans reposed complete faith in them and entrusted to them the responsibility of guiding the destiny of the people in this world and the next.

Having emerged as the highly respected and dominant class in the Vedic Age and having led the society for a considerable period of time, the Brahmins started consolidating their position. Soon vested interests were formed in which they were entrenched. Their sole concern was to devise means for

perpetuating class dominance. It provoked challenges to their exalted position from certain quarters such as the warrior class (*kshatriyas*), by no means insignificant in Vedic society. There were also non-believers and sceptics who challenged the existence of gods and efficacy of *yajna*. The new trends in thinking were sure to jeopardise the supremacy of the priestly class. Thus pushed to a corner to defend their vested interest, Brahmins adopted the role of obscurantists. The Rig Vedic age of creation came to an end.

As stated in the last chapter, the major part of the four samhitas is devoted to the delineation of the rituals and the magic practised by the Brahmins. The *Atharva Veda* and the *Yajur Veda* are full of incantations, charms and formulas (*mantras*) which Brahmins alone knew how to utilize for the benefit of the people. In primitive societies magic being a form of rudimentary science is of great importance. It reveals man's desire to bring nature under his control. Magic is no doubt ineffective, but by thinking that charm or a mantram can help him to achieve the aim of dominating nature, man is strengthened in his resolve. In due course man's determination leads him by grasping the theory of cause and effect to unravel the mysteries of nature. Indian magic, however, did not take that direction ; it did not develop into science as it did elsewhere ; it soon degenerated into priestly magic which thwarted further progress and caused social stagnation.

Not satisfied with advocacy of their caste superiority as described in the Vedas, the Brahmins produced a new series of sacred books called *Brahmanas*[5] to strengthen their hold on society. The Brahmanas contain long and detailed discussions of elements and analysis of Vedic sacrifices as well as fragments of ancient Aryan myths and legends. They set down the ritual to be observed by the householder while performing sacrifices. The main aim of the authors is to mystify and not to explain the philosophy or object of the sacrifices.

The most remarkable thing about the Brahmanas however is that they have elevated the status of the priests and equated them with the gods. Yes, they are the very gods. Says Winternitz : "Two kinds of gods there are, indeed, namely the gods are the gods, and the learned and studying Brahmans

are the human gods. Between these two is the sacrifice divided : the sacrificial gifts are for the gods, the presents (*dakshina)* for the human gods, the learned and studying Brahmanas ; by means of sacrificial gifts the sacrificer pleases the gods, (and) by presents he pleases the human gods, the learned, studying Brahmans ; these two kinds of gods transfer him (the sacrificer), when they are satisfied, into the blessedness of heaven."[6]

Making himself equal to the gods did not satisfy the over-ambitious Brahmin when his position was threatened and status challenged. He wanted to raise himself still higher and to be counted above the gods as supreme in creation. This was done by adding, in course of time, a few new mantras to the Brahmanas. "Thus at last", write Winternitz, "the conclusion is arrived at, that the Brahman is no longer a human god by the side of heavenly gods, but that he raises himself above the gods. Already in the *Satapatha Brahmana* it is said : 'The Brahman descended from the Rishi and, indeed, is all deities i.e. in him all deities are incoporated.' This presumption on the part of the priests, the beginning of which we meet within the Brahmanas, is not only of the greatest interest for the history of culture as an example of priestly arrogance, but it is also the precursor of a phenomenon which we can trace through the whole of Indian antiquity. We see how already in the Brahmanas the priest exalts himself over the gods through the sacrifice ; in the epics we read countless stories of ascetics who, through asceticism, attain to such ascendency that the gods tremble upon their thrones."[7]

Among the duties of the Brahmins is to encourage offering of sacrifices by means of which people are made ripe for the otherworld. The Brahmanas frequently remind the "ripened" people about their duties towards the Brahmins : They must show them honour, give them presents and may not in any way oppress them. The property of a Brahmin may under no circumstances be touched by the king ; the king can give away the whole of his kingdom except the property owned by the Brahmins. The Brahmins went to the extent of refusing to acknowledge the authority of the king over themselves. At the consecration ceremony of a king the priest says : "This

man, ye people, is your king. But *soma* is the king of Brahmins."

"All that is noble and beautiful in Hinduism" writes B.K. Ghosh "was already foreshadowed by the *Rig Veda* and all that is filthy and repulsive in it by the Brahmanas. The morality of the Brahmana texts is no higher than that of primitive medicine-men. Thus, in connection with the *Mahavrata* sacrifice most immoral and obscene acts are enjoined to be performed in the presence of pious spectators. The grasping greed of the Brahmins, so much in evidence already in the *Atharva Veda*, has passed the bounds in the Brahmanas. Here the Brahmin coolly claims that in every dispute between a Brahmin and a non-Brahmin the judgement should be given in favour of the Brahmin with a cheerful disregard of other people's interest : a Brahmana author has declared that a murder is no murder if the victim is not a Brahmin. And another declares with the same cool confidence that the shudra is *yathakama-vadhya*, i.e. one who can be killed at will."[8]

Each Veda has its own Brahmanas classified with it. The chief among them are *Aitreya* and *Kausitaki* (*Rig Veda*) *Panchvimsha*, *Sadvimsha* and *Jaininiya* (*Sam Veda*), *Satapatha* and *Taittiriya* (*Yajur Veda*) and *Gopatha* (*Atharva Veda*). They are all written in prose. Going through the Brahmanas one feels to have passed through an arid desert of puerile speculations on ritual ceremonies. Dr. Radhakrishnan is of the opinion that "the Brahmana literature is a rigid, soul-deadening commercialist creed based on a contractual motive that took the place of the simple devout religion of the *Rig Veda*."[9] Dr. Das Gupta holds that "these works are full of dogmatic assertions, fanciful symbolism and speculation of an unbounded imagination in the field of sacrificial details."[10] In the view of Macdonell the Brahmanas ; "reflect the spirit of an age in which all intellectual activity is concentrated on sacrifice describing its ceremonies and discussing its origin and significance."[11] Levi observes that "it is difficult to imagine anything more brutal and more material than the theology of the Brahmanas. Morality finds no place in this system. Sacrifice which regulates the relations of man to the divinities, is a mechanical art, operating by its own spontaneous energy,

and, hidden in the bosom of nature, it is only brought out by the magic art of the priest."[12]

In the Brahmanas the Brahmins priests elaborated the system of *yajnas* (sacrifices) by which the denizens of heaven were appeased and persuaded to grant wishes and boons. "Prajapti (Lord of Creation) is the sacrifice", is an oft-repeated sentence. "The soul of all beings, of all gods, is the sacrifice." Different kinds of *yajnas* associated with different events had to be performed throughout the life of an Aryan, and the Brahmins had to be invited to preside over the ceremony and chant Vedic mantras to make the sacrifice effective enough to bear the desired fruit. It was mostly through such ceremonies that Brahmins earned their rich rewards. Any sacrificer who did not behave in accordance with the directions of the priests or failed to pay them adequately had to suffer. "They (Brahmins) need only perform the prescribed ceremonies in reverse order, or employ spells at the wrong place and the fate of the sacrificer was sealed."[13]

If performance of *yajna* was calculated to bring worldly success another religious institution, *tapas* (self-inflicted torture), was introduced to achieve uncommon, spiritual power. As in the former so in the latter, the Brahmins were the propounders and experts. To grasp the significance of either, lessons were to be learnt at their feet and approval sought from them. "Just as the sacrificer was supposed by a sort of charm that his priests worked for him in the sacrifice, to compel the gods, and to attain ends he desired, so there was supposed to be a sort of charm in *tapas* by which a man could, through and by himself, attain to mystic and marvellous results. The distinction seems to have been that it was rather worldly success—cattle, children and heaven—that were attained by sacrifice (*yajna*); and mystic, extraordinary, superhuman faculties that were attained by *tapas*."[14]

The most effective measure that the Brahmins adopted to make their position secure and safe was to divide the society into four castes in which they ranked above the rest. They assumed the garb of divinity and declared their standing as the highest in the society very close and, indeed, above to that of the gods. Probably due to the rising warrior and commercial

classes they could not entirely ignore to give them a higher status next to themselves but the toiling millions—workers, artisans and tillers of the soil—were relegated to an inferior position outside the pale of respectability.

The *shudras*, the lowest in the caste-system, were assigned a three-fold duty, namely, agriculture, craft and the service of the higher castes. Through laws and practices introduced by themselves, the Brahmins appropriated bulk of the produce of the working classes. Deprived of most of the fruits of their toil the shudras had to undergo hardships and sufferings.

The pernicious caste system has survived despite efforts of reformers and onslaughts of revolutionaries, and has assumed a very rigid form. The beginning of the system may be traced to the famous Purusha-Sukta hymn of the *Rig Veda* which describes the mythical legend of the sacrifice of a primeval giant called *Purusha* the "Ideal Man" or "World Spirit" :

> When (the gods) divided *Purusha*, into how many parts did they cut him up ? What was his mouth ? what arms? What are said to be his thighs and feet ? The Brahmana was his mouth; *rajanya* (kshitriya) made his arms; the vaishya (trader) was his thighs and the shudra sprang from his feet.[15]

The Vedic text that ensured the superior position of the Brahmins could now no longer be allowed to pass as a saying of mortal beings but had to be considered as sacrosanct revelation, inviolable and everlasting. There is sufficient material in the samhitas to show that the Vedic hymns were produced and composed by men but the Brahmins ignoring the evidence tried to present the Vedas as divinely revealed knowledge. "The divine or non-human origin (of the Vedas) is of a much later period", writes Laxman Shastri Joshi discussing the origin of the Vedas. "The composers of the Vedic hymns and mantras speak at a number of places regarding their creation. Some argue for example that the mantras composed by them are like 'the milkman or the steering by the boat man'. (*RV* 10/116-9). At another place they contend that 'these mantras have been composed by us in our minds and pronounced through our mouths'. (*RV*. 1-171-2). One of them says 'I

found this mantra' (*RV* 10-67-1); yet another that 'it is the result of the inspiration got (by him) from a good drink of *somrasa* (*RV* 6-47-3); while a third says that 'I consider the mantra as a shower coming from a heavenly laden cloud. Just as the wind carries the clouds, so does my being carry my hymns, (*RV* 7-9-4-1)."[16]

When the Brahmins contrived to appropriate the highest position and ensured the same on the support of the Vedic texts, the attitude changed. The Vedas were solemnly pronounced to be divine revelation and not the sayings of human beings. Joshi goes on to say: "The Vedic composers however began to talk in a different strain at a later period. They began to believe that 'God awakens the intelligence of the poet and helps it like a friend' (*RV* 1-37-4, 6-47, 10-7-88, 8-52-3). In the end they even came to believe that the gods themselves are the seers and the composers (of the Vedas); they teach man the mantras and he only pronounces them (*RV*. 1-179-2 and 7-76-4)."[17] Thus was man's work ascribed to the Divine Being and the Vedas attained the privileged status of an unchallengeable holy scripture.

The inviolability of the Vedas was further buttressed by other religious texts in post-Vedic period and no argument was allowed to be used or heard against it. The lawgivers who were invariably Brahmins discouraged free discussion or rationalistic thinking calculated to lower the divine status of the Vedas or subvert priest-ridden society. The celebrated Manu ordained : "The Vedas are called *sruti* and *dharmashastras* (law codes) the *smriti;* the two are beyond the purview of *mimansa* (argument) in every respect... The *dvija* (literary twice-born, that is Brahmin, kshatriya and vaishya, the three upper castes) who disobey either *sruti* or *smriti* on the strength of logic (*hetu shastra*) should be driven out of good society, because one who vilifies the *Vedas* is a heretic."

Like other classses holding vested interests in any human society the Brahmins made laws that suited their purpose. Being recognised as repositories of culture and holding a dominant position, they devised methods to keep large majority of people in ignorance and spiritual thraldom. Apart from practising magic and presiding over the sacrifice the study

and teaching of the holy scriptures became their preserve. Since the Vedas were orally transmitted from memory, it was not possible for non-Brahmins, especially the lower caste shudras, to know them. When the possibility of reducing the sacred text into writing appeared in the seventh or eighth century B. C., Brahmins refused to take its advantage for fear that their monopoly will come to an end. The Indian merchants who used to travel abroad for commerce brought a script from West Asia which was gradually enlarged and adapted to suit the special requirements of the learned and colloquial dialects of India; it became known as *brahmi lipi* or "sublime writing." But for many centuries the Brahmins declined to give the Vedas or any of their religious texts a written shape; they preferred to continue carrying them in their memory. "When this script was first brought to India in the eighth or seventh century B. C. the Indians had already possessed an extensive Vedic literature handed down in the priestly schools by memory and memory alone. The alphabet soon became known to the priests. But they continued as before to hand down their books by the old method only. It is probable, however, that they began to make use of written notes to aid the memory on which they still in the main depended."[18]

Dissemination of knowledge was detrimental to the vested interest of the Brahmins. Perhaps it would have been too much to exclude the warrior and the trading classes from the privilege of studying the holy texts, but since the scriptures were not available outside the Brahmin community all non-Brahmins were virtually deprived of it. A stringent law was made to warn the shudras if not the others : "The ears of a Shudra who listens, intentionally, when the Veda is being recited are to be filled with molten lead. His tongue is to be cut if he recite it. His body is to be split in twain if he preserve it in his memory. The priestly view was that God himself had bestowed the exclusive right of teaching upon the hereditary priests, who claimed to be, each of them, great divinities, even to be the gods."[19] It is therefore no surprise that for several centuries the Vedas remained unwritten even after a script had been evolved and was indeed used by educated classes. By reducing the

scripture to writing the Brahmins would have endangered their monopoly of knowledge and a lucrative business; they were strongly opposed to an innovation which could harm their exclusive right. Rhys Davids remarks : "We ought not to be surprised to find that the oldest manuscripts on bark or palm leaf known in India are Buddhist; that the earliest written records on stone and metal are Buddhist, that it is the Buddhists who first made use of writing to record their canonical books; and that the earliest mention of writing at all in the voluminous priestly literature is in the *Vashishta dharmashastra* one of the later law books, and long posterior to the numerous references quoted above from the Buddhist cannon."[20]

After having tightened their hold on society and retarded the growth of enlightenment by nourishing ignorance, the Brahmins in the later Vedic age cultivated mythical beliefs and superstitions most of which have survived to the present day. Many hymns were included in the samhitas to foster notions which were unknown in earlier times. The theories of soul, rebirth, transmigration, Supreme Being, the other world and *karma* so prevalent today in all sections of Hindu society, were evolved by the Brahmins during this period. The theory of the existence of soul was extended from men to trees. There are a number of verses in the Vedas in which trees are invoked as deities. The souls or spirits are supposed to dwell in them and to haunt them. "If the soul leaves the tree, the tree withers, but the soul does not die. These souls may have dwelt, and may dwell again in human bodies. And long after the rise of Buddhism ideas associated with this belief are often referred to. Offerings are made to these tree spirits, even human sacrifices are offered; they were consulted as oracles, and expected to give sons and wealth; they injure the trees in which they dwell, and they are pleased when garlands are hung upon the branches, lamps are lighted round it, and *bali* offerings are made (that is food is thrown), at the foot of the tree. The Brahmin priests, too, are enjoined in their books of sacred law and custom to throw *bali* offerings to such tree spirits."[21]

But this was not all. We read in the sacred texts about many superstitious beliefs and fanciful practices fostered by the Brahmins to deepen ignorance and perpetuate their spiritual

hold. There was divination of all sorts, prognostication by interpretation of dreams, auguries drawn from the celestial phenomenon, determining lucky combination of stars, laying ghosts, using charms and incantations not only on men but also on snakes and other beasts, the power of prophecy, palmistry, astrology, consulting gods through possessed girls, muttering mantras to ward off evils or to cause virility or impotence. The list is a very long one indeed and shows how from very early times Indian society was held in spiritual slavery by the priestly class.

In the Brahmana period for the first time, women were lowered in status. Beaten by Indra's thunderbolt the wives are weakened and deprived of rights of heritage and even the right to their bodies.[22]

By about 1000 B.C. sacerdotal supremacy was complete in the areas where the Indo-Aryans had settled down and established their hamlets. The Brahmins dominated not only every sphere of social life but every part of the day to day existence of an individual. How machine-like a man was expected to function has been described by Winternitz : "Whether an action is to be performed to the left or to the right, whether a pot is to be put in this or in that spot on the place of sacrifice, whether a blade of grass is to be laid down with the point to the north or to the north-east, whether the priest steps in front of the fire or behind it, in which direction he must have his face turned, into how many parts the sacrificial cake is to be divided, whether the ghee is to be poured into the northern or the southern half or into the centre of the fire, at which instant the repetition of a certain spell, the singing of a certain song has to take place, these are questions upon which generations of masters of the art of sacrifice have meditated, and which are treated in the most searching manner in the Brahmanas. Upon the correct knowledge of all these details does the weal and woe of the sacrificer depend."[23]

There is considerable literature produced in the Buddhist days and in the modern times describing the sordid ways adopted by the Brahmins to achieve supremacy. Perhaps much of it is exaggerated and one-sided. Let us therefore conclude this

chapter with what E.B. Havell, a great admirer of Indo-Aryan culture, has to say on the subject :

> Not only had the Brahmans become an organised intellectual force which asserted for itself the leading position in intellectual affairs hitherto held by the Kshatriyas, but in ministering to the religious needs of the Indo-Aryan community at large they had established a monopoly which lent itself to unscrupulous exactions and to the encouragement of grossest superstitions...A *mantram* could bring victory or defeat in wars, assure the prosperity of the state or the destruction of its enemies...In short, the *mantram* embodied in itself the dynamic principle of the universe ; there was no concern of daily life, great or small, which could not be affected by it for better or worse...
>
> Another instrument of tyranny and deception placed in the hands of Brahmans was the Aryan belief in the divine power of sacrifice, which had come down from the earliest Vedic times. In the course of centuries the performance of sacrificial rites had grown into a fine art, which the Brahman experts were not slow to use for their personal advantage, for the efficacy of the sacrifice was said to depend largely upon the liberality of the indispensable *dakshina*, or reward, bestowed upon the officiating priests and their servants. Like the *mantram*, the application of Vedic sacrificial ritual extended to every concern of public and private life, great and small. The purity and divine power of Brahman was said to be implicit in the fact that sacrificial rites were performed for his benefit from the time of conception in his mother's womb until his body was consigned to the bosom of holy Ganga or consumed in the funeral pyre. And not only did public sacrifices and the worship of tribal deities involve a vast expenditure of state revenues, but the household rites for which the services of Brahmans were generally necessary grew more and more numerous and complicated. Some of the great state ceremonies, such as the kings's consecration and the horse sacrifice performed to secure victory and the welfare of the kingdom, absorbed the whole attention of the court functionaries for over a year, required the attendance of thousands of Brahmans and a corresponding bountiful distribution of largesse, besides inordinate feasting and wholesale slaughter of animals.
>
> The due fulfilment of domestic sacrificial rites was equally onerous for the Aryan house holder. Besides the ordinary daily rites at which the householder himself

presided, there were endless sacrificial ceremonies which required the attendance of Brahman experts. There were sacrifices for obtaining male offspring, birth sacrifices which had to be repeated every month ; sacrifices of feeding, naming, piercing the ears, shaving the head and investiture with the sacred thread, and numerous others connected with ordinary daily events or with marriage and death ceremonies. The indiscriminate slaughter of animals and the free indulgence in the intoxicating juice of the soma plant associated with Vedic rituals involved the tacit recognition by the Aryan priest-hood of many bloody and obscene orgies of the uncivilised non-Aryan tribes, in which human victims were frequently sacrificed.

Another superstition—though not by any means the exclusive property of the Brahman class—which the Buddha came to attack was practice of tapas, or self-torture, by which it was believed that both gods and men acquired spiritual insight and command over the forces of nature. Sitting between five fires, or upon an ant-heap in the forest, standing upon one leg and holding an arm above the head until the muscles of it were atrophied, and a carefully graduated system of starvation were among the means adopted for subduing the physical senses, in the belief that if such conduct were pushed to the farthest extreme of human endurance men could become masters of the universe, and that even the gods must submit to their will.[24]

3

An Era of Intellectual Dialogues

THE excessive ritualism developed in the Brahmanas produced a natural reaction in the minds of those who had outgrown, with the passage of time, the blind belief in the efficacy of mantram and tapas. There was a revolt in the Brahmin community itself and the thoughtful, however few, among them refused to perform the intricate rituals for gaining liberation (*moksha*). Stress was laid on deep meditation and thinking in a detached manner. Explaining the rise of the new class as reported in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, the Brahmin sage Yagnyavalka told Kahola Kaushitakaya :

> He who transcends hunger and thirst, grief and delusion (is the self). When Brahmins know this self and have arisen above the desire for the sons, for wealth and for the worlds, they wander about as mendicants. For the desire for the sons is the desire for wealth and the desire for wealth is the desire for the worlds. Both these are indeed desires. Therefore, a Brahmin, after he has done with learning, should wish to rest upon its strength ; and after he has done with that strength as well as learning he becomes a man of meditation ; and after he has done with meditation as well as with what is not meditation he becomes indeed a knower of Brahman.[1]

Disgusted with the mechanical-ritualistic society, many individuals with rebellious spirit went into forests for contemplation to seek intelligent solutions of human problems. They

produced a new kind of literature known as *Aranyakas* (forest texts). Meditation rather than performance of sacrifices is the pervading idea of their teachings and they invariably substitute a simple ceremonial for complicated ones prescribed in the *Brahmanas*. The *Aranyakas* are mainly devoted to the exposition of mysticism and symbolism of the sacrifice and priestly philosophy in general. They are part of the Vedas but serve as handy volumes for the use of forest hermits to study the Vedic texts ; hence the name. While the Brahmanas were meant for students and house holders, the Aranyakas ideally suited the ascetics dwelling in the forests who were intent upon spending the rest of their lives in contemplation of the Supreme Being. "Important service was rendered", writes V. M. Apte, "by the Aranyakas when they stressed the efficacy of the inner or mental sacrifice as distinguished from the outer or formal sacrifice consisting of oblations of rice, barley or milk. They thus helped to bridge the gulf between the way of works (*karma marga*), which was the sole concern of the Brahmanas, and the way of knowledge (*jnana marga*) which the Upanishads advocated."[12] The goal of human life now ceased to be "heaven" of the later Vedas and the Brahmanas, and became contemplation upon symbols and austerities for the realisation of self as the highest aim of the devout.

The quest for knowledge of the advanced Aryans did not end with the production of the Aranyakas; speculative thought developed further. In certain respects the fresh step was of a revolutionary nature. While so far the banner of revolt had been raised by only progressive Brahmins, now thoughtful kshatriyas also joined them. And, for the first time, attempts began to be made to abandon the barren path of mysticism and find the causes of natural phenomena in Nature itself. No doubt many intellectuals still clung to old mode of thinking and met the challenge of the time by setting up a precarious monotheism on the decayed foundations of licentious polytheism ; but some Brahmins and kshatriyas, mostly the latter, with a revolutionary bent of mind, applied reason to solve the mysteries of the universe. This is evident from another bunch of literature called *Upanishads* which was produced a century later (circa 800 B. C.). "While, then, the Brahmans were pursuing their

barren sacrificial science", writes Winternitz, "other circles were already engaged upon those highest questions which were at last treated so admirably in the Upanishads. From these circles, which originally were not connected with the priestly caste, proceeded the forest hermits and wandering ascetics, who not only renounced the world and its pleasures, but also kept aloof from the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Brahmans. Different sects, more or less opposed to Brahmanism, were soon formed from these same circles, among which sects the Buddhists attained to such great fame."[3]

The Aranyakas are believed to have been a link between the Brahmanas and the Upanishads because while the earlier Aranyakas carry the main ideas of the Brahmanas, the later ones contain thoughts which were elaborated and fully developed in the Upanishads. The Upanishads constitute the last phase of Vedic texts. The four samhitas constitute the first phase, the Brahmanas the second, the Aranyakas the third and the Upanishads the fourth and the last. Thus the Upanishads come at the end, and hence the teachings they embody are known as the *Vedanta* (the end of knowledge).

Though recognised as a part of the Vedic literature the Upanishads are a class apart for having blazed a new trail in the ancient Indian thinking. "The principal Upanishads are formally regarded as part of the Vedas", says Bouquet, "but they are not to be identified with the four great Vedic books, since they are to a great extent critical (indeed very critical) reflections upon the latter."[4]

The age of the Upanishads opened in the eighth century B. C. and culminated in the rise of Buddhism in fourth century B. C. They continued to be written till thirteenth century A. C. Even as late as 1848 A. C. Debendranath Tagore composed *Brahmi Upanishad.* But those written after 400 A. C. to connect specific sects with the Vedas are not regarded by orthodox Brahmins as canonical.

In all, there are more than 200 Upanishads though the traditional number is 108 classified according to the four Vedas.[5] The more important among them written before the advent of Buddhism are not more than fifteen in number. Some like *Brihadaranyaka* are fairly long but some others, as

Mandukya, are very short. The Upanishads proper are attached to the Vedas—the *Rig Veda* has two, the *Sama Veda* two, the *Yajur Veda* seven. All the other Upanishads are connected with the *Atharva Veda* where it was easier to make additions to the text.

The principal Upanishads are : Kath, Chhandogya, Isha, Kena, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Brihadaranyaka, Swasamved, Maitreya, Svetasvatara, Kaushitaki and Mahanarayana.

During the Aranyaka period, a practice had grown for a son or a pupil to sit at the feet or by the side of the father or the guru, as the case may be, and learn the secrets of life by asking all sorts of questions. The name Upanishad, "secret or esoteric doctrine", is derived from the Sanskrit root (*upa* near, *ni* down, *sad* to sit) to sit down near someone. Thus Upanishads are, in effect, dialogues between teacher and student who sat near each other to discuss and dilate upon the doctrines concerning life and the mysteries of nature which surround us. The oldest Upanishads are either in archaic prose or in epic metre. Like the samhitas, they were transmitted orally and should be taken as the archives of the ancient *ashramas* (schools). There are many repetitions and a number of parallel passages in them; for instance, the discourse proving that breath is the vital constituent of any human being is found in five Upanishads.

In the Upanishads we find the first spark of revolt headed mainly by the kshatriyas (warriors) against the mechanical sacerdotalism of the priestly class.

That the ruling class of warriors was gradually emerging as a challenge to the sacerdotal supremacy even in the Vedic times cannot be doubted. Some kshatriya chiefs were patrons of learning and were accepted as authority on sacred lore. The most famous of these was king Janaka of Videha whose contributions to philosophical debates are by no means small or insignificant. "There was the Panchala king, Pravahana Jaivali", says R. K. Mookerji, "who taught Brahmana scholars like Shilaka, Dalbhya (*Chhandogya* Up, i, 8), Shvetaketu and his father, Uddalaka, (*ib* v. 3). King Ashvapati Kaikeya was another learned king teaching Brahmana pupils (ib. v. 11).

So was king Pratardana (*Kaushi. Br.* xxvi, 5). Narada, the foremost Brahmana scholar, with all his learning has to seek the instruction of Sanatkumara on *Atman* (ib vii, 1). Sanatkumara told Narada that what he had hitherto studied was mere words, that he was a *Mantravit* (knower of mantras) but not an *Atmavit* (knower of self). The Arunis, father and son, once sought the teachings of King Chitra-Gangayani (*Kaushitaki Up* i, 1). Another learned king mentioned is Janasruti Pautrayana (*Chh. Up* v, 2-3). Another was King Brihratha (*Maitrayani Up.*). Ajatshatru, King of Kashi, was another very learned king whose superiority and pupilage were acknowledged by that distinguished Brahmana scholar, Dripta Balaki Gargya, whose fame for learning was known all over the country, to the Ushianaras, Satvati-Matsyas, Kuru-Panchalas and Kashi-Videhas (*Brihad Up.* ii, 1, 1)."[6]

As a matter of fact, while the Vedic Age was coming to an end, the Brahmins were losing their superior position in the intellectual field and the kshatriyas were coming up to possess it. One kshatriya king, Janamejya, is reported in the *Aitreya Brahmana* to have performed a sacrifice from which he excluded the Brahmins. The Brahmin statesman, Kautaliya, records in the *Arthashastra* that "Janamejya lost his great power by his sin of wrath and violence against the Brahmins."[7] Rhys Davids says : "It will sound most amazing to those familiar with Brahmin pretentions (either in modern times in India, or in priestly books such as Manusmriti and the epics) to hear Brahmins spoken of as 'low born'. Yet that precisely is an epithet applied to them in comparison with the kings and the nobles. And it ought to open our eyes as to their relative importance in these early times."[8] Davids adds : "But as a class, and as a whole the priest looked upto the nobles, and were considered to be occasionally beneath them."[9]

Davids' contention may be debatable, but this much seems certain that the importance of kshatriyas as a rising class could not be overlooked even in the Vedic times as some of the hymns indicate :

> Strengthen the power of knowledge
> and strengthen intellects (Brahmin).

Strengthen the ruling power
and strengthen heroes (kshatriya)[10]

Anticipating the antagonism between the Brahmins and the kshatriyas that must have been already simmering, the *Yajur Veda* admonished :

Where Brahmin and kshatriya both
move together in concord
that world shall I know one of bliss,
where gods with Agni dwell.[11]

The dreaded hostility, however, could neither be avoided nor eliminated ; it finally erupted in the later Vedic times when the kshatriya kings began to claim the same privileges as enjoyed by the Brahmins. Rivalry was the main point in the dispute between two sages, Vishwamitra (kshatriya) and Vasishta (Brahmin), and the story, as narrated in the old scriptures, shows that the kshatriya earned the special privileges to a considerable extent for which he fought.[12]

The Upanishadic intellectualism was practically confined to the courts of kshatriya kings like Pravhna Jaivali, Janaka Videha, Ashvapati Kaikeya and others.

The gulf that appeared between the Brahmin and the kshatriya widened with the passage of time. It was caused by two outlooks on life. While Brahmin preachers depended upon insight, inspiration and divine revelation, kshatriya thinkers, as men of action, adopted a rational outlook having faith in the law of cause and effect.

The change in intellectual climate emboldened men of even low birth to think for themselves, take part in philosophical debates and disseminate knowledge. "It is often people of despised caste and low rank", observes Winternitz, "who are in the possession of the highest wisdom. Thus the Brahmin Kausika is instructed by Dharmavyadha, the pious hunter and dealer in meat, upon philosophy and morality, and especially about the theory that not birth, but virtuous life, makes one a Brahmin. Thus also the pedlar Tuladhara appears as the teacher of the Brahminical ascetic Jajali."[13]

Essentially, the Upanishads continue to expound thoughts and traditions of the Vedas. Most of them carry further the

philosophic trends while elaborating and expanding the Vedic doctrines. But some of the thinkers also display courage in making original speculations about and observations on life. They are not afraid of advancing radical ideas when occasion demands to do so. As H.D. Bhattacharya says "the most remarkable facts in the religious history of the period are the amazing diversity of the beliefs, a proneness to reverence, either towards gods or towards men of wisdom and morality, and eager pursuit of religious truths and a tendency to make experiment in religious matters."[14]

Though forming part of the Vedas, the Upanishads far excel in depth of thought and learning what had preceded them. What makes the authors of this literature noteworthy in the history of Indian thought? "It is", answers Winternitz, "because these old thinkers wrestle so earnestly for the truth, because in their philosophical poems the eternally unsatisfied human yearning for knowledge has been expressed so fervently. The Upanishads do not contain 'superhuman conception', but human, absolutely human, attempts to come nearer to the truth—and it is this which makes them so valuable to us."[15] And it is in the dialogues of the Upanishads that some of the rarest gems of human thought were set which are today prized possession of the Hindu society :

> "Truth is one but wise men describe it variously."
> "Truth alone triumphs not untruth."
> "I will speak of the right ; I will speak
> the truth ; May that protect me."
>
> Taittiriya-Upanishad)
>
> "Arise, awake, obtain the best teachers and
> learn from them. Sharp as the edge of a razor,
> hard to cross and difficult is the path,
> so the sages say."
>
> (Kathopanishad)
>
> "Lead me from unreal to the Real ; lead me
> from darkness to Light, lead me from
> death to Immortality."
>
> (Brihad. Up)[16]

Nevertheless, a deep study of the principal Upanishads reveals their heterogeneous nature and compound composition. Often

the abruptness with which the discussions begin and end gives the impression that the parts "were originally like independent beads later strung together without too strong a connecting thread."[17] The impression sought to be created by contemporary Hindu leaders that the Upanishads contain an integral religious philosophy is not borne out by facts ; for various thought trends are inextricably interwoven in them and it is difficult to see any consistency in their teachings. "Anyone who sets out to find one or more complete philosophical systems in the Upanishads will soon be disappointed", says Bouquet, "they tend to be formless, repetitive and full of seeming inconsistencies. It would however be unjust to sweep them on one side for these reasons. Treated seriously, they show the tentative beginnings of revolutionary spiritual thought on all manner of subjects, though they do not perhaps make any pretentions to have achieved finality, except in one or two matters, such as the identity of one Absolute Brahma with the one Atman and the doctrine that all is Brahma, and that it is the real solution of most of life's problems."[18]

The cardinal principles, fundamental doctrines, dogmas, tenets and traditions which constitute Hindu faith were primarily formed in the period of the Upanishads. In subsequent centuries they were only elaborated, clarified and supplemented by celebrated commentators. The theories about caste, karma, rebirth, transmigration of soul, other world and moksha were defined in the Upanishads more or less in definitive terms.

Generally, the later Upanishads lack originality and are the product of mechanistic Brahminism. Some of them contain vulgar ideas verging on obscenity and describe disgusting ceremonies for the so-called spiritual advancement. The *Bhikshukopanishad* while mentioning orders of *sanyasins* (wandering ascetics) lays down for one of them "to live on the dung and urine of cows."[19] "In the *Yogatattvaopanishad*, we are told, that in the process called Amaroli, one is required to drink one's (own) urine every day and snuff it in the nostrils and then perform the Vajroli process."[20]

The law of karma and the doctrine of rebirth cursorily dealt with in the samhitas were further developed and made inalien-

able part of Brahminical religion in the Upanishadic period. The soul binds itself with the matter through *vasana* (desire) for material enjoyment. As long as the vasana is not liquidated the soul can not avoid rebirth. Another concept *samskara* (pre-disposition) also supported the theory of rebirth. A man's desire carries him to the objects of his desire thus determining the field of his activity. His thought is a creative power and he becomes that which he thinks. His future circumstances are made by his present actions. The consequences of the act are inherent in the act itself. This is, in few words, the core of the law of karma and rebirth.

There are vague references to heaven in the Vedas and the idea of other-wordly life appears in the Brahmanas. But the elaboration and discussion of these are found only in the later Vedic literature and the Upanishads.

The main theme, however, of the principal Upanishads is the Brahman, the Reality behind this universe. The word Brahman, derived from the Sanskrit verb-root *brh* which means "to expand", denoted the entity whose greatness, magnitude or expansion cannot be limited or measured. "The doctrine of Brahman implies" says Ruth Reyana, "that all the deities are contained in a single all-pervading principle, and are parts of it. Everything arises out of that single principle, and ultimately vanishes in it. It is a principle pervading the entire universe."[21]

The Atman-Brahman concept in the Upanishads denotes the existence of both the individual self and the Universal Self; though ultimately they are held to be identical, their difference is admitted in the relative state. The entire fifth chapter of the *Svetasvatara Upanishad* deals with the contrast between the Universal Soul and the individual soul and, it is held, that after having rid itself of its limitations which it had imposed upon itself through ignorance, the individual soul wins immortality and is then recognised as identical with the Universal Soul.

The idea of the Supreme Being was first adumbrated in the tenth *mandla* (chapter) of the *Rig Veda* but attained its full development and meaning in the Upanishads. The variety of gods has not been abolished ; no deity has been deposed but every one of them has been subordinated to the Highest Being.

Kath Upanishad says : "Through fear of Him fire burns ; through fear of Him sun blazes ; through fear of Him Indra, Vayu and also Yama are speeding on their way."[22]

The Vedas are full of talk about the various gods and extol them. This knowledge is no longer of the highest importance. Angirasa tells Shaunaka in the *Mandukya Upanishad* : "There are two kinds of knowledge to be sought, as declared by those who know Brahman—the higher and lower. Of these the lower is that of the *Rig Veda*, and of phonetics, rituals, grammar, etymology, prosody and astrology. And the higher is that by which the Imperishable is apprehended."[23]

What are the characteristics of the Imperishable ? *Chhandogya Upanishad* states : "Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else—that is the Infinite. Where one sees something else, hears something else, understands something else, that is finite. The Infinite indeed is immortal, the finite is mortal.[24]

Kath Upanishad puts it thus : "Beyond the senses there are the essences, beyond the essences there is the mind, beyond the mind there is the understanding and beyond the understanding there is the great soul. Beyond the great soul there is the unmanifest, and beyond the unmanifest there is the spirit. Beyond the spirit there is nothing, that is the highest reach."[25]

Mundaka Upanishad describes the Brahman in these words : "That which cannot be seen or grasped, which has neither origin nor properties, which has neither eyes nor ears, neither hands nor feet, which is eternal, all-pervading, omnipresent and extremely subtle—that is the Imperishable which the sages regard as the origin of all beings."[26]

Unlike the Vedic gods, Brahman of the Upanishads is unapproachable : "The eye does not go there, speech does not go nor the mind. We do not know, we do not understand, how can we instruct about it ?[27]

Again :

> The knowing self is never born, nor does it die ;
> It sprang from nothing, and nothing sprang from it ;
> It is unborn, eternal, everlasting and primeval ;
> It is not slain when the body is slain.[28]

And therefore the riddle :

> He who does not conceive it—to him it is known. He who conceives it—he does not really know. It is not really understood by those who understand it. It is really understood by those who do not understand it.[29]

Yama solves the riddle when he cuts short the reasoning of Nachiketa by telling him : "Not by argument is this knowledge obtained."[30] He thus opens as we shall see, the floodgates of irrationalism which has submerged Hindu thinking from the period of Upanishads to the present day.

Yama's statement is repeated in other Upanishads though in different ways. For instance *Kath Upanishad* says :

> The Self cannot be gained by the study of
> scriptures, nor by the power of intellect,
> nor even by much hearing.
> It can be gained by him whom It chooses;
> to him It reveals Its true nature.[31]

In contrast, some Upanishads raise hope by laying stress on the usefulness of knowledge in understanding the Brahman :

> He is not grasped by the eye, nor even by speech, nor by the other senses, nor by austerities or by works. When a man's nature is purified by the serene light of knowledge then through meditation he can see Him who is without parts.[32]

Aitareya Upanishad declares that the great elements, the gods, the living creatures whether moving or flying, and whatever is stationary are guided by intelligence. "Intelligence is the basis ; for intelligence is Brahman."[33]

Yagnyavalka too lays stress on knowledge and, indeed, he identifies the Brahman with knowledge when he tells Janaka that "he who consists of knowledge among the senses is verily the great Unborn Self"[34] ; but later on he adds : "He (Supreme Being) is incomprehensible, for he cannot be comprehended ; He is indestructible for he cannot be destroyed. He is unattached for he does not attach himself ; He is unfettered, He does not suffer, He is not injured."[35] Yagnyavalka introduced the theory of *neti* (not this) to cognise the Brahman. Instead of making a positive assertion about the Reality, he

would prefer to say : "He, the Self, is not this, not this."

Kath Upanishad says : "His form is not to be seen ; no one beholds Him with an eye. He is to be apprehended by the heart, by thought, or by mind. Those who know Him thus become immortal."[36]

The ignorance of the primitive man imagined supernatural forces behind natural phenomenon and created the whole galaxy of gods. But in course of time Indian society developed mentally and the fairy tales contained in the Vedas to delude infantile mind no longer satisfied, at any rate those who wanted to fathom deeper and know why things happen as they do. When the scepticism spread far and wide it caused upheavals in the society leading to its disruption.

With the disintegration of the Vedic society, Indian thought travelled in two different directions. Those cowed down by the prevailing disorder and widespread misery continued to indulge in fantasy and imagined some supernatural force, if not the anthropomorphic God, handling the affairs of the world. A batch of thinkers evolved the abstract though unreal philosophy known as idealism or spiritualism. But there were others who boldly attempted to find the explanation of the natural phenomena in Nature itself which, at the end of a long process, led them to lay the foundations of materialism.

Interestingly, there are passages in the Upanishads where the soul is taken to be composed of material ingredients, is said to dwell in the cavity of the heart, is known by the heart and is identified with the heart. "Prajapati is this—the heart. It (the heart) is Brahman."[37] The soul is of the size of "a grain of barely rice,"[38] it is the "measure of a span,"[39] it is "the size of a thumb."[40]

To disagree with prevalent and popular notions, to differ from accepted views and be sceptic about widely recognised beliefs are the signs of courage and a revolutionary bent of mind. Though the Brahmins tried to suppress dissent yet there is evidence in the Upanishads that non-conformist ideas were gradually spreading in Indian society. *Svatesvatra* refers to them :

> Some wise men, being deluded, speak of Nature (as the first cause of the universe); others likewise time.[41]

Referring to the origin of the universe, Gargi Vachaknavi questioned her husband, Yagnyavalka, who traced everything to Brahman. "In what are the words of Brahman woven like warp and woof ?", she asked. The Brahmin sage, surprised at the temerity of his wife, silenced her by replying : "O Gargi, do not ask too much, lest your head should fall off. You are asking too much indeed about a divinity about which one should not ask too much. So do not ask too much."[42] Yagnyavalka meant, according to Vedantist D.S. Sharma, that the divinity "cannot be reached through reasoning but through scriptural revelation." It is a remarkable instance which shows that in the citadal of the Brahminism heretical questions had begun to be raised which remained unanswered and had to be silenced by dire threats.

Nachiketa in his dialogue with Yama asks : "When a man passes away there is this doubt : Some hold that he exists and some that he does not. This I should like to know instructed by you. This is the third of the boons (I pray for being granted)."[43] Yama admits that "even the gods of old had doubts on this ; it is not easy to understand ; so subtle is the truth about it." Yama therefore persuades Nachiketa not to raise the point and not to press him but release him (from answering it). But Nachiketa insists and refuses to accept any other boon such as children, wealth, cattle, gold, horses, long life etc., imploring : "O Death, tell us that about which people have doubts, what there is in the great hereafter." Nachiketa refuses to choose any other boon but the one that can penetrate the mystery. But Yama (the idealist Brahmin) had no answer to give and therefore plays safe by maintaining silence.[44]

Significantly, Yama warns Nachiketa to beware of the deluded people who believe that "this is the only world and there is no other ; for they are ignorant men who blunder and die and are born again and again."[45]

Similar allusions challenging the notions of God, soul, rebirth, other world and First Cause, can be found here and there throughout the Upanishadic literature. Of the fifteen

important Upanishads at least one, *Swasamved*, is mainly devoted to rational thinking and contains outspoken heretical views. It preaches that "there is no reincarnation, no knowledge, no God, no world and that all words and ideas and moral values are mere illusions."[46] The thesis of *Swasamved* as given in Sutra II has been summarised in the following words : "There is no incarnation, no God, no heaven and no hell ; all traditional religious literature is the work of conceited fools ; nature, the originator, and time, the destroyer are the rulers of things and take no account of virtue or vice, in awarding happiness or misery to men ; people deluded by flowery speeches cling to gods, temples and priests when, in reality, there is no difference between Vishnu and a dog."[47] "We must admit", says : K. V. Gajendragadkar, an orthodox scholar of Upanishadic philosophy, "that there are a few Upanishads which try to explain the creation of world from naturalistic or physical principles."[48]

By asking fundamental questions about life and the universe some authors of the Upanishads made a marked departure from the traditional thought-processes of ancient India. There is something strikingly refreshing in raising points like "whence are we born ?", "whereby do we live ?", "on what are we established ?", "where do we go from here ?", and "what is the source and the cause of this universe ?" The answers given seldom satisfy a modern mind steeped in science. But what is of great importance is that sincere attempts are made to rid the human spirit of sacerdotal tyranny. Debiprashad Chattopadhyaya has aptly remarked ; "With these texts we at least reach an age in which some of our thinkers could turn away from such obvious futilities as the almost endless dicussions concerning the sacrificial implements, spells and of course the fees."

The origin of the naturalist and the sceptic thoughts, as we have seen, can be traced even in the hymns of the *Rig Veda*, the oldest of the samhitas, which refer to heretics and unbelievers. They evidently must have been intellectually gifted men who pioneered the revolt against sacerdotal supremacy, and in that role they should be accepted as the fathers of Indian materialism and rational thought. The Vedas and the earlier

Upanishads refer to *swabhava vadins* (naturalists) and their doctrines who disputed the reality of the anthropomorphic gods and scoffed at the pretensions of the priests. They were empiricists who believed in knowing and understanding the world through experience and observation. An empiricist was called a *darshanika* the word which significantly came to be subsequently applied to a philosopher in general. The oldest compendium on materialism was *Lokayata Darshana* whose authorship is popularly ascribed to Brahaspati who is sometimes taken to be the mythical preceptor of the gods but may have really been a great scholar by that name. The book, however, is not extant.

The Upanishads as explained above have come to be regarded as the foundation of the Vedantist metaphysical system. But we cannot fail to find in them unmistakable strands of materialist-rationalist thinking. That is only natural; the speculation of men whose spiritual thirst could no longer be staisfied with the moonshine of primitive Vedic religion, inevitably tended to give a physical explanation of natural phenomena.

Belittling the importance of sacrifice *Mundaka Upanishad* observes : "Frail are these boats, the eighteen sacrificial forms, in which the lower karma has been enunciated. Fools who praise these as the highest good are subject to old age and death again and again."[49]

The Upanishads repeatedly state that the Brahman is eternal, indestructible, incomprehensible and imperishable but in the *Taittiriya Upanishad* sage Varuna tells his son Bhrigu : "Matter is Brahman ; for it is from matter that these beings are born ; it is by matter that when born they live, and it is matter that they enter on passing away."[50]

Brahman is sometimes identified with sense organs[51], at other times with mind[52], and occasionally with space[53].

In the *Chhandogya*, Pravahana Jaivali when asked about the origin of the world, replies to Salavatya : "Space is the origin of the world. For all these creatures take their rise from space and they return to space. Space is indeed greater than these. Space is the ultimate abode."[54] The natural inference is that Brahman is not the First or the Final Cause. In the

Svetasvatara, Agni is assumed as "the one unborn from which every thing springs." Agni is not identified with Brahman. In the *Kath* the world is visualised "as having evolved out of the primeval material conditions." In the *Brihadaramyka*, Yagnyavalka says to Maitreyi : "Arising out of these elements (*bhutas*), into them also one vanishes away. After death there is no consciousness (*na pretya samjna asti*).[55] Such observations of the Upanishadic sages lead to the conclusion that the first cause of creation, in the view of at least some of them, is not idea but matter.

Thus confronted with the materialist theories of the origin of the universe, idealist philosophers, to sustain their beliefs, resorted to the cult of pantheism. In the *Chhandogya* the Universal Self is identified with the cosmos : "Of that Universal Self bright (heaven) is the head ; the manifold (sun) is the eye : the varying (wind) is the breath, the extended (space) is the trunk ; the abundant (water) is the bladder ; the supporting (earth) is the feet ; the altar is the chest ; the sacrificial grass is the hair ; the *grahapatya* fire is the heart ; the *anvaharya* fire is the mind and the *ahavaniya* fire is the mouth."[56]

Yet in its embroynic form, Pantheism was to develop further in later centuries to meet the challenge posed by rationalist philosophers. Pantheism is only inverted form of materialism but its acceptance in the cricles of idealists would indicate the tremendous influence that materialist thought exerted on contemporary Indian society.

The Upanishads are mostly the works of the idealist Brahmins who continued to dominate the intellectual life of India during the centuries (c 800-600 B.C.) Some dents, however, had definitely been made in the sacerdotal supremacy for we find that among the participators in the dialogues are, besides kshatriyas, women, outcastes and even persons of illegitimate birth. The rational thought was mostly initiated and propounded by ruling warriors supported by humbler elements in the society. "That this secret knowledge (contained in Upanishads) was a monopoly of the ruling class—the kshatriyas or the kings—and further, was an important aid for their assuming and maintaining class-superiority, is a point

which the authors of the Upanishads quite proudly proclaimed."[57] Power was passing in ancient Indian society from one class to another ; it was a sign of progress.

It is remarkable that the Greek thought also developed on similar lines during almost the same period. It began with Thales (640-546 B.C.) and culminated in the dialogues of Plato (427-347 B.C.) and the works of Aristotle (384-322 B.C.).

The rationalist-materialist trends were disapproved and disliked by Brahmin intellectuals who found them detrimental to their vested interests. Such parts of Upanishads as contained the heretic notions, were either totally ignored or underrated, and the other parts in which the idealistic theories were expounded given prominence. What has come down to us as the Upanishadic philosophy, popularly known as the *Vedanta*, is not the ancient rationalist thought but the theory of the Brahman, the Universal Soul, and Its relations with the individual soul discussed earlier. The Vedanta has come to be accepted as the most representative and authoritative school of Indian philosophy ; it claims to contain the essence of Vedic wisdom. Basically, however, it is a metaphysical system of theology which conveys only a partial view of thought-currents and culture of ancient India.

4

The Six Schools of Liberation

THE discursive thoughts known as Aranyakas and Upanishads, developed in forest abodes, became the source of the different philosophies evolved in post-Vedic period by succeeding generations which contributed to India's cultural growth. "The Upanishads do not contain", says Ruth Reyna, "any philosophic synthesis as such, but they set forth certain fundamental ideas from which the various orthodox schools of Indian thought developed their particular doctrines. The ambiguities in the positions of the Upanishadic thinkers gave rise to diverse and at times polaric interpretations by the founders of later philosophic systems."[1] In course of time, six schools came into existence. Though it took many centuries for the schools to take the final shape in which they are known today they appear to have been founded in rudimentary form as early as 700-600 B.C. Scholars have not been very successful in collecting accurate information about the lives of their founders. About some it is suggested that they were legendary figures but that is not correct. There is sufficient evidence to believe that these ancient masters were historical personages who wielded considerable influence on the thinking and behaviour of the Indian people.

The names given to the six schools are ; 1. Purva Mimamsa 2. Uttar Mimamsa or Vedanta, 3. Vaisheshaka, 4. Nyaya, 5. Samkhya and 6. Yoga. They are usually regarded as consist-

ing of three pairs according to the similarity of their basic beliefs. The first two form the one pair, the second two another and the remaining two the third. This relation held good for a long period ; but subsequently a cleavage occurred in the first pair leading to the isolation of Uttar Mimamsa which then came to be known as the Vedanta (the End of Knowledge) already referred to in the previous chapter.

All the six schools, in their final form, express belief in one way or another in the existence of soul and formally accept the authority of the Vedas. Therefore they are recognised as orthodox in character. They are also idealistic and theistic as opposed to other three schools (to be discussed in the next chapter) which are heterodox and atheistic by profession and practice.

The one doctrine common to all the six orthodox schools was the belief in the *karma* (action) theory and its corollary—sansara rebirth of man in order to suffer the consequences of his actions. The sole concern, therefore, of the masters was attainment of *moksha* (liberation) of the individual soul from the cycle of rebirths.

1. PURVA MIMAMSA

The word *mimamsa* is derived from the verb root *man* "to reflect" and therefore it is taken to mean exposition or investigation of the Vedic doctrines. Such reflections stretching over a long period were divided into two parts, Purva Mimamsa and Uttar Mimamsa. The Purva Mimamsa (earlier investigation) is so called because it claims to be the first and the foremost consideration of the Vedas. It is an enquiry into the rituals narrated in the samhitas and is therefore also called Karma Mimamsa. The main theme of the Purva Mimamsa is that action (*karma*) is the very essence of human life. Knowledge is fruitless without action ; happiness is impossible without action ; human destiny itself cannot be fulfilled without action ; therefore, right action (*dharma*) is the spiritual prerequisite of life.

Though the propounders of the mimamsa tenets contend that these investigations are rational and logical, they tenaciously adhere to the orthodox patterns of Brahminical

liturgies. Mimamsa does not care to attempt any philosophical analysis of the ultimate reality, soul and matter or their relation to one another. It welcomes all philosophical discussion to the extent that it is calculated to further an understanding of *dharma* as enjoined in the Vedas. For that purpose it supplies a general summary of the rules for interpretation of Vedic texts for guidance. According to the propounders of the system, all rituals and ceremonies prescribed in the Vedas lead to the enlightenment of the mind and the spiritual evolution of the soul which makes it necessary that the import of the texts is clearly understood. Mimamsa endeavours to show how eternal happiness is attained by correct performance of rituals founded on *dharma*.

The founder of the Purva Mimamsa school is Jaimini who may have lived anytime between 600-200 B.C. Almost nothing is known about his life beyond that he wrote *Mimamsa Sutra* in 890 sections (*adhikarnas*) containing 2621 *sutras* (aphorisms). A *sutra* is a short, forcible mnemonic sentence full of information employed to facilitate learning. In Hindu religious literature it is used to mean that which runs like a thread through points in discussion and holds them together. For the followers of Mimamsa (*mimamsakas*) performance of religious sacrifices, rites and rituals is the only way to attain liberation. The most important point which exercised their minds was the correct interpretation of the Vedic texts. Jaimini held that sacrifices instead of causing bondage, as some Upanishadic thinkers believed, were a prelude to the attainment of wisdom because *karma* prescribed by the Vedas resulted in the purification of mind which is the first step towards the highest spiritual attainment. The scriptures which should govern daily life of the Aryans require no doubt to be accurately interpreted and Mimamsa was believed to fulfil this need.

The mimamsakas classified the hymns of the Vedas into *vakyas* (supersensory experience of seers) and *arthavadas* (passages which explain the meaning of the religious texts), the latter ones of minor significance. In the opinion of Jaimini the Upanishads are arthavadas and therefore of little impcrtance and undeserving of his attention. The Vedic *vakyas*, on the other hand,

are commands which direct us to do something or forbid us from doing something else. Under no circumstances can the Vedic injunctions be set aside.

To defend the Vedas against the onslaughts of sceptics and non-believers the mimamsakas produced a unique epistemological theory that all knowledge should be presumed to be true until proved otherwise. Thus, what is to be proved is not the truth of cognition but its falsity. "This attempt to confirm knowledge through a search for falsity is the main trend of the mimamsa theory of knowledge. They use this theory to establish the validity of the Vedas."[2] By such reasoning as this, Jaimini and his followers tried to establish the non-createdness and the eternality of samhitas. They were emphatic in stating that the sacred texts had no author because they are revealed knowledge and therefore there can be no possibility of shortcomings or defects in them and so to question their authoritativeness is inconceivable.

The mimamsakas consider the performance of sacrifices, rituals and rites prescribed by the Vedas as an end in itself. The deities are retained in this system only in name and the ritual itself comes to occupy the place of heavenly gods. And ordained *karma* is right because it is commanded by the holy scripture ; it is a duty performed for its own sake ; that it leads to a proper and desired end is only incidental. The essence of life consists in performing Vedic rituals and adhering to its symbolism. In the eyes of Jaimini, ethical or conventional considerations for doing something are no certain guides and are thereforce apt to mislead. Sense of duty is far more important and a guaranteed path to the highest spiritual goal than the intention to do good.

Jaimini's rigidity extended to the sphere of language. He believed in the eternality of words ; it led him to repose faith in the magic power of the sacred mantra and the Vedic hymn. Sanskrit was the perfect language and a true manifestation of the language of gods ; it is the natural and the only vehicle of the divine revelation. The Vedas could not have been revealed in any other language. Knowledge of dharma, says Jaimini, can be obtained only by verbal testimony (*shabda*). He defends the divine origin of the Vedas after establishing the eternal

character of *shabda* (word). He lays down five propositions to clarify his thesis :

1. Every word has an inherent power to convey its meaning which is eternal.
2. The knowledge derived from the word is called *updesha* (teaching)
3. In the invisible realm the word is the infallible guide.
4. The word is authoritative.
5. The word is self-sufficient and does not depend upon any other support for its meaning.

Jaimini evinced unsurpassed faith in the super-human character of the Vedas. He not only asserted that they were eternal and uncreated but also that in their presence there was no need to postulate a Supreme Being. He nominally recognised a number of deities in order that the prescribed sacrifices may be made to them : but he as well as other early mimamsakas were indifferent to the concept of God. Jaimini has frequently stressed that the Vedas and the Brahmanas embody the entire philosophy of man and that the sacrifices and the rites prescribed by them if rightly understood and faithfully performed can help in attaining liberation. But Jaimini's followers gradually introduced the divine principle into the system. His most outstanding disciple, Kumarila Bhatta, admitted that behind the knowledge contained in the Vedas was one Supreme Spirit which prevaded the universe; thus was the notion of Godhood smuggled into the system.

The Purva Mimamsa carries forward the traditions of ancient Vedic religion fortified by the authors of the Brahmanas as explained in Chapter Two. Of all the six schools it is therefore the least philosophical. Nevertheless, it has exerted by no means small influence over the lives and culture of the Hindus. "The importance of Mimamsa in the Hindu culture is testified by its present day effects", says Theos Bernard, "for no part of the daily life of the Hindu is without the influence of the teachings of mimamsa. All rituals and ceremonies depend upon it ; all moral conduct is justified by it ; all Hindu law is founded upon it ; mimamsa breathes life into the super-structure of Indian culture."[3]

1. UTTAR MIMAMSA

The second school of Indian philosophy is Uttar Mimamsa also called Brahma Mimamsa or, as it is popularly known, the Vedanta. It claims to be the second exposition or investigation of the Vedic texts and centres on the contemplation of the Brahman. This is the most developed idealistic metaphysics of the Aryans. It derives its inspiration mostly from the Indo-Upanishads.

In the Vedic period, the Indo-Aryans looked outwards at the objective reality of the world and adopted the natural religion with a pantheon. When later on they conceived the idea of One God as the origin of the universe, He was still different from man, the subject-object duality was maintained. The Aryans finally reached their highest conception of the Supreme Being underlying all the variety of existence. Here the duality disappears : the *Parmatman* (Universal Self) is no other than the *Jivatman* (individual self). The idea was first adumbrated in the earlier Upanishads. In the *Chhandogya Upanishad* the reality is defined as "the self" which is free from evil, ageless, deathless, sorrowless, angerless, thirstless and it is emphasized that a man must not only try to understand but also realize this truth to achieve liberation. If jivatman recognizes his own true nature he can become one with Brahman or Parmatman (Supreme Self) ; then there is no rebirth. This recognition is what the Upanishads call self-realization. When such realization dawns no other object is seen to exist apart from the Brahman.

The philosophy of the jivatman being a part of the Parmatman conceived originally by the Upanishadic seers, has been elaborated upon in the Uttar Mimamsa literature. When fully developed in later centuries it came to be known as the Vedanta and claimed to contain the quintessence of Vedic knowledge, a philosophical system of thought unique in the world.

According to Vedantists, Brahman is no material entity ; it is pure consciousness from which emanates the universe of living and non-living. While the universe is ephemeral, perishable and unreal, Brahman is indestructible, everlasting and real. There is no difference between the Universal Soul and

the individual soul ; only so long as the latter is deluded and fails to understand its own true nature it seems separate from the former. Once this ignorance is removed the individual soul becomes identical with Universal Soul.

To explain what occasioned the delusion of the individual self, Vedantists of a latter date introduced a new concept of *maya* which has been variously interpreted as ignorance, magic, skill, delusion and power as suits the occasion. But generally maya is taken to be ignorance of the Reality. Through maya man identifies himself with the body or with one or more of its *koshas* (sheaths) namely 1. *anna-maya kosha* (the sheath made of vital force). 2. *manomaya kosha* (the sheath of mind), 3. *jnanamaya kosha* (the sheath of intelligence) and 4. *ananda-maya kosha* (the sheath of bliss). This indentification of soul with any one of the koshas is the cause of man's enslavement and misery.

By concealing his own nature from man, the maya contrives to keep him in bondage; it also creates illusory entities in the whole universe which delude him and prevent him from realizing the Reality. Unless and until he tears asunder the veils thrown over things by the maya there is no possibility for man to achieve liberation. As soon as man realizes his true nature and identifies himself with Brahman, the Cosmic Consciousness, the mysterious appearances created by the maya altogether evaporate. Self-realization is thus the effective instrument to achieve final liberation, the moksha. This theory has been tersely stated in the four *mahavakyas* (great formulas) of the Vedanta: 1. *Tattvamasi* "That Thou Art" (*Chhandogya Up.*) 2. *Aham Brahma Asmi* "I am Brahman", (*Brihadaranyka Up.*) 3. *Ayam Atma Brahma* "This Self is Brahman", (*Brihadaranyka Up.*) and 4. *Prjnanam Brahma* "Brahman is Consciousness" (*Brihadaranyka Up.*).

Self-realization on which great stress is laid in the Vedanta only opens the soul's eyes to the Reality whereby this unreal world no longer deceives it. But it causes no change in the physical condition ; the world of plurality exists as before. Self-realization only destroys ignorance and creates a new mental outlook.

To arrive at the high moral plane for attaining moksha the Vedanta advocates *ahimsa* (non-injury) and *samyam* (mastery over one's passions and desires). No living being should be injured, for *himsa* (violence) retards growth. Passions and desires are not intrinsically evil but they must not be allowed to go out of control.

The Vedanta has shown three *margas* (paths) to liberation namely, *jnana marga* (the way of wisdom or philosophical meditation), *bhakti marga* (the way of devotion, meaning fervent devotion to a personal God) and *karma marga* (the way of action that is worship through action—sacrifices, offerings, and penances and rituals ; the ultimate aim being self-realization). The three paths being difficult to reconcile, the Vedantists are generally of the opinion that *jnana marga* is most effective and helps the votary to arrive at the goal quicker. So long as one continues to follow the path of ignorance one is, according to this school, subject to the law of karma and the doctrine of rebirth. But knowledge as conceived by the Vedanta is not uninhibited thought ; it is confined to the realization of the individual self and its identification with the Universal Self ; it cannot go beyond this ; it should not challenge the existence of atman or Parmatman.

The exponents of the Vedanta discouraged critical thinking which was believed to come into clash with the fundamentals of the doctrine. "Hence thought, the intellect itself", writes Heinrich Zimmer, "must be transcended if true reality is to be attained. Logic is a help for preliminary clarification, but an imperfect, inadequate instrument for the final insight ; its orderly notions, oppositions, and relationships must be overcome if the searching mind is to attain to any direct conception or realization of the transcended truth."[4] It is laid down that the *adhikarin* (competent student) of Vedanta should be imbued with *shraddha* (utter faith) to discover the truth but should have neither a critical attitude nor a sense of curiosity while studying the philosophy. Under the circumstances, "who is competent, and consequently entitled to study the Vedanta in order to realize the truth ?" questions Zimmer and himself answers : "Not we Westerners. Not intellectuals "[5]

Seemingly refined and philosophically subtle, the Vedanta is in essence not very different from the Purva Mimamsa with which it has been rightly coupled by keen analysts of Hindu religious literature from early days. But throughout Indian history it has played a more effective role in maintaining priestcraft in power than any other orthodox school.

1. THE VAISHESHAKA

While the Vedanta found the origin of the universe in pure consciousness or Brahman, the Vaisheshaka took an entirely different line. It made the first bold attempt to seek the cause of natural phenomena in Nature itself; hence the name Vaisheshaka (from *vishesha* "particularity"). The Vaisheshakas say : The source of all misery is the feeling of attraction or aversion ; when we have knowledge of the distinguishing characteristics of the Reality, objects of perception will no longer awaken within us any such feelings. The Vaisheshakas believe their philosophy to be distinct from and superior to the other systems of thought because they claim to have blazed a new trail.

Kanada, the founder of the Vaisheshaka school, lived approximately in the sixth century B.C. and expounded the atomist theory for explaining the origin of the universe. He resolved reality to its smallest possible division which is called *anu* or *kana* in Sanskrit and commonly translated as atom. He was, therefore, derisively called Kanabhaksha or Kanabhoja "the atom-eater". These names appear merely to be descriptive of his achievements or accomplishments for his real name is reported to be Kashyapa. His system has also been called *Auluka* which comes from *uluka* "owl" because Kanada used to meditate all day and seek food by night as was the habit of many thinkers in his time.

The Vaisheshakas believe that the world is composed of innumerable atoms which are invisible and eternal, beginningless and endless ; and are incapable of division. They hold that there are nine eternal realities, the only substances (*dravyas*) composing the universe : earth (*prithivi*), water (*apas*), fire (*tejas*), air (*vayu*), ether (*akash*), time (*kaala*), space (*dik*), soul (*atman*) and mind (*manas*)

Kanada preached that all substances are formed by the atoms which are governed by the qualities of inherence and conjunction. The atoms of the same class tend to combine and produce different gross elements. The combination takes place by the material cause inherent in the atoms themselves. All substances are connected with each other by the quality of inherence. The relationship of conjunction operates in the process of formation. Inherent parts cohere to produce a substance. In this way the whole universe comes into existence. Though the atoms are invisible and eternal the compounds which are produced by their conjunction are visible and non-eternal. Because the world is formed of parts it has a beginning and an end.

Having posited atoms as existing independently and bringing the world into being through the operation of their qualities, the Vaisheshakas proceeded further. They guessed that so long as the atoms are isolated and motionless, they can produce nothing. Therefore a new factor which is invisible and called *adrishta* (the unseen) has to operate. Thereupon the conjunction of the kanas and the adrishta produce the aggregate of things beginning with binary atoms.

The Vaisheshaka system was a departure from the accepted Vedic theories though some traces of its fundamental doctrines are to be found in a rudimentary form in the samhitas.

Kanada refused to accept that intelligent Brahman or pure consciousness was the cause of the universe because in that case, he argued, the world also must be intelligent which it is not. He believed consciousness to be the product of a particular organisation of atoms. For him the soul is merely a developed form of organism which itself is a peculiar formation of matter. At a certain stage of continued combination, he held, an atomic aggregate acquires the property of receiving impressions of external objects and then reacting to them. It is at that stage that consciousness appears.

Kanada believed in the plurality of souls which belief he inferred from difference in their status and the variety of conditions under which they had their being. Each soul, in his view, experiences the consequences of the way of its formation and has its characteristic individuality.

According to the Vaisheshaka, the soul can secure final release (*moksha*) by realization of the truth of things. It is only when man realizes that the attractions of the world are ephemeral and not lasting, that his soul can enjoy the bliss of deliverence.

The Vaisheshakas divided valid knowledge into four categories namely, perception, remembrance, inference and intuition. They had an empirical revolutionary theory with regard to ascertainment of truth : a knowledge could be accepted as true or false only after putting it to the test of practical life. If in practice it led to a successful result it was to be accepted as true, otherwise it was to be discarded as false. "The criterion of truth is the correspondence between the subjective world of thought and the objective world of form. Reality is pervaded by existence ; therefore, to be real is to exist, and to exist is to be knowable ; so when there is perfect harmony between the inner and outer world, the truth of reality is said to cast its light."[6]

But for the introduction of adrishta which is said to make the atoms function and combine, Kanada's theory is out and out materialistic. Since the tendency to be attracted towards each other is inherent in atoms, there is absolutely no need for the unseen principle to make them work and coalesce. Kanada has himself explained that the substances are produced by the causes inherent in the atoms. It is, therefore, surprising why he felt that an impulse from outside was needed to let the atoms begin to work. Did Kanada himself believe in the adrishta or was the concept introduced later on by some of his followers ? It is difficult to answer. Kanada has disputed the immateriality of the soul and thereby rendered the assumption of the unseen cause as useless for the movement of the atoms and the creation of the world. As a matter of fact, the Vaisheshaka system is complete without the introduction of the adrishta. One of Kanada's commentators, Upaskar, says that substances are formed by a principle inherent in the primeval matter and it is the natural propensity of the atoms to unite. Adrishta thus becomes superfluous. In any case Kanada's system makes no room for the soul in the idealist sense of the term. "The Vaisheshaka accepts the universe", says

Bernard, "as it is found extended in space and changing in time, displaying a medley of sounds, colours and forms of the phenomenal world. By the process of reason it organizes this chaotic mass into a coherent and intelligible whole, and exhibits a system that sets forth the cosmic plan which shows the inter-relation of all its parts into a synthetic whole, operating with such perfection that its very conception is spiritually exhilarating."[7]

The Vaisheshaka system was denounced by the orthodox Brahmins as "semi-destructive" and "semi-nihilistic" because of its dynamic view of nature considering it in a process of becoming and not as unchanging being. Probably Kanada introduced adrishta as a concession to appease Brahmin orthodoxy ; perhaps it was an attempt to bring the system in conformity with the venerable Vedic tradition.

The later Vaisheshakas made another concession to the idealistic outlook by their acceptance of the self (*atman*) as a substance separate from the physical one. Their concept, however, was an offshoot of their materialistic approach. For according to them soul was not necessarily conscious but became so when associated with the body. Nevertheless, the conceptions of the adrishta and the atman without the body remained vital loopholes in the Vaisheshaka philosophy through which all sorts of Vedantic and near-Vedantic notions like that of moksha were easily smuggled into this essentially materialistic and empirical system. While these weaknesses earned recognition of the orthodoxy for the Vaisheshaka and it was accepted as a *darshana* (school of philosophy) by the Brahmins in the later periods, it ceased to contribute to the growth of Indian materialism.

Kanada has been compared with the Greek philosopher, Democritus who flourished in fifth century B.C. Some scholars are of the opinion that Kanada's atomism is even more self-contained than that of Democritus. By visualising atoms as possessing the inherent property of coalescing and uniting, the Vaisheshaka theory was free of the fallacy which subjected the Democritean system to Aristotle's attacks. By resorting, however, to the conception of necessity in the sense of natural law Democritus abolished God. His followers went a step

further and made the atoms dynamic which led to the development of the philosophy of atheism. The Vaisheshaka suffered from the fatal weakness of the adrishta which barred the path of free thought in ancient India.

There was another reason too for Indian thinking to lag behind. The social conditions needed for evolution of bolder conceptions from natural religion to materialist philosophy did not ripen in India as they did in Greece. Therefore, intellectual life remained a priestly monopoly in the former while this monopoly was smashed in the latter. Nevertheless, the Vaisheshaka atomism proved the common point of departure of a number of thinkers who tried to free Indian society from the domination of priesthood in the remote ages.

4. NYAYA

The Nyaya philosophy is said to have originated from the studies of methodology of public debates and dialogues which was widespread in the Aranyaka and Upanishadic periods. The term *nyaya* in Sanskrit signifies "going into a subject" that is holding analytical investigation through the process of logical reasoning. *Nyaya* literally means "that by which mind is led to conclusion". It is, therefore, recognised as the science of demonstration of correct knowledge. Vatsyayana, the renowned commentator on *Nyayasutra*, defines it as a "critical examination of the subjects of knowledge by means of the canons of logical proof". The system is, therefore, particularly noted for having elaborated thinking processes on the grounds of logic.

The Nayaya is also called *Tarka Vidya* (science of reasoning), or *Vada Vidya* (science of discussion). The common tendency in the writings of the *nyayakas* is to bring everything under definite categories and classify it ; they developed the theories of universals and syllogisms.

The founder of the Nyaya school was Gautama about whose actual date there is considerable argument among scholars but recognised authorities generally place him in the middle of the sixth century B.C. Tradition has it, that he was born in Gautamsthana a village 28 miles distant from Dharbhanga in North Bihar. A fair is held every year in this village on the 9th

day of the lunar month of *Chaitra* (March-April) in memory of the master. Gautama was married and two miles east of Gautamsthana is another village Ahlyasthana where a stone slab lies between two trees which is believed to mark the resting place of his wife, Ahalya. Gautama is said to have spent most of his life in a hermitage situated on the banks of Ksirodhadi river on the outskirts of modern Dharbhanga (ancient Mithila). He is also reported to have lived for some time in Godna, a town at the confluence of Ganga and Saryu rivers. After retirement from active life he went to Prabhasa, the famous sacred place of pilgrimage in Kathiawad on the west sea-coast.

Gautama was the son of a Brahmin engaged as priest in the palace of King Kurushranjya. His son, Satananda, too became a priest in the royal family of Mithila. But Gautama himself was interested in philosophy and spent his whole life in pondering over the problems of life. He is frequently referred to in the Sanskrit literature as *dirghatapas*, "long penance" and *akshapada* "eye-footed". He probably received these names from his long penances during the periods of his contemplation and study as also from the fact that he had the habit of keeping his eyes fixed on his feet while walking and absorbed in contemplation during the course of a stroll.

Gautama accepted the atomic theory of the Vaisheshakas, including the physics and metaphysics of the system. He regards the phenomenal world as a composite of everlasting, unchangeable and causeless atoms existing independently of thought. For this reason the Nyaya and the Vaisheshaka were related to each other, though with certain distinctions peculiar to each. The two have been known in the cultural history of India as Nyaya-Vaisheshaka.

Gautama's philosophy is tersely contained in his *Nyaya Sutras*, the opening verse of which declares that supreme felicity is attained by knowledge of the true nature of the following sixteen categories : 1. *pramana* (means of right knowledge), 2. *samshya* (doubt), 3. *prayojana* (purpose), 4. *drishtanta* (example), 5. *siddhanta* (established tenet), 6. *ayuvara* (members of a syllogism), 7. *premeya* (object of right knowledge), 8. *tarka* (confutation), 9. *nirnaya* (ascertainment), 10. *vada* (discussion),

11. *jalpa* (controversy), 12. *vitanda* (cavil), 13. *hetavabhasa* (fallacy), 14. *chala* (equivocation), 15. *jati* (futility) and 16. *nigrahasthana* (disagreement in principle).

It will be seen that the first nine of these sixteen categories deal more strictly with logic while the last seven have the function of preventing and destroying error.

According to Gautama the means of right knowledge (*pramana*) are : *pratyaksha* (perception), *anumana* (inference), *upamana* (analogy) and *shabda* (verbal testimony). It is remarkable that accepting Gautama's views as a start other schools of Indian philosophy devised their own theories of securing right knowledge. Perception (*pratyaksha*) is the only means admitted by the Charvakas ; verbal testimony (*shabda*) is the only means admitted by the Mimamsakas ; perception (*pratyaksha*) and inference (*anumana*) are admitted by Vaisheshakas and *Bauddhas* (Buddhists), perception (*pratyaksha*), inference (*anumana*) and verbal testimony (*shabda*) are accepted by the Samkhyas. To the four means recognised by the Nyayakas a fifth called presumption (*arthapatti*) is used by Prabhakaras, and a sixth called non-existence (*abhava*) is applied by Vedantins ; a seventh and eighth called probability (*sambhava*) and tradition (*aitihya*) are added by the Pauranikas.[8]

The syllogism of the Nyayakas comprises five elements. 1. The proposition (*pratijna*), 2. The cause (*hetu*), 3. The exemplification (*drishtanta*), 4. The recapitulation of the cause (*upanaya*) and 5. The conclusion (*nigamana*). While the modern logic starts with an affirmative proposition, universally valid (all smoke presumes the existence of fire), Nyaya asserts invariable association (of smoke with fire).

To enable the mind to arrive at right conclusion the *Nyaya Sutra* attaches importance to methods of debate and discussion. Evidently knowledge of epistemology could have nothing to do with liberation of the soul but to placate the traditional faith, the *Nyaya Sutra* claimed that this knowledge led to *nihsryasa* (liberation). "Nyaya teaches", says Bernard, "that the world consists of the uninterrupted flow of misapprehensions, faults, activity, birth and pain. By the cessation of the flow of this chain is to obtain a fuller understanding of the true nature of things. It is claimed that this will free us from rebirth ,eth

cause of all sorrow and suffering and enable us to achieve the supreme end of life". Such an exalted goal can be attained by thoroughly realizing the four subjects discussed in the *Nyaya Sutra*, namely, 1. the thing to be avoided (pain) 2. its cause (ignorance and desire), 3. absolute avoidance and 4. means of avoidance (true knowledge).[9]

Gautama refused to support the claim of Mimamsakas that the Vedas were eternal. Led by him, early Nyayakas did not accept the existence of God. But in a later period both the Nyayakas and the Vaisheshakas changed to theism although neither went so far as to assume a creator of matter. "When the Vaisheshaka and Nyaya systems came to be blended together", observes Garbe, "the combined school adopted the theistic views, but never saw in the personal God, whom they assumed, the creator of the matter."[10]

5. THE SAMKHYA

The philosophy that was destined to capture the imagination of the intelligentsia in ancient times and directly rule the Indian mind for nearly fifteen centuries and indirectly even to the present day, is known as *Samkhya.*

It is the oldest school of Hindu Philosophy, for it is the first attempt to harmonise the teachings of the Vedas through reason. By having expounded through careful reflection the systematic account of the process of cosmic evolution, the Samkhya attained a unique position in the history of Indian thought. Samkhya exposition is not mere metaphysical speculation, but is a purely logical account based on the scientific principles of conservation, transformation and dissipation of energy. The Samkhya is held to be the most notable attempt in the realm of pure philosophy. The term *Samkhya* is derived from the Sanskrit root *samkhya* "to number" because it enumerates the principles of cosmic evolution by rational analysis and in the philosophical sense also it is used because it teaches discriminative knowledge which enables us to distinguish between matter and spirit.

We do not know much about Kapila, the founder of the Samkhya system. He flourished probably in the seventh or sixth century B.C. and might have belonged to a non-Brahmin

caste. The lawgiver Baudhayana refers to him as assura and the *Bhagvata* states that he taught Samkhya doctrines to assuras.[11] It is said the name of Kapila's father was Kardama and his mother's name was Devahuti. It is doubtful if his father was educated for Kapila learned rudiments of knowledge from his mother and only later in life developed his philosophy through his own genius. In old age he lived on an island called Sagara situated at the mouth of Ganga ninety miles from Calcutta. He was venerated in his lifetime by his fellow countrymen as a great thinker and benefactor of humanity. A likeness of the philosopher was carved in the cave temple of Annuradhapura in Ceylon. Every year on the last day of the Hindu month of Magha (Jan-Feb) thousands of devotees flock to the place where Kapila meditated and gave fruits of his intellectual labour to his disciples.

Whatever his caste or background, Kapila was an uncompromising empiricist. The starting point of his teachings was a thorough analysis of human experience. He based the theory of creation on his belief in evolution. The most important contribution he made to the development of Indian philosophical thought was his sensationalist theory of knowledge. He strongly held with cogent reasoning that sense perception is the only reliable source of knowledge. He defined perception, inference and testimony as parts of valid evidence. By admitting inference in the category of evidence, Kapila anticipated the rise of inductive logic. He held that the organs of perception are products of nature ; they do not deceive but give us the accurate knowledge of the external world which truly exists and is therefore real.[12] "The Samkhya deals exclusively with the empirical world which is governed by the rules of reason and can be known", writes Bernard. "It teaches that the world-order is reason and is an expansion of the highest kind of intelligence ; that there is no part without an assignable function, a value, a purpose ; that there is always an exact selection of means for production of definitive ends ; that there is never a random combination of events ; and that there is order, regulation, system and division of function". The universe should be looked upon as self-created and self-evolved with no super-power to be its cause or guide. It is "a dynamic

order, an eternal process of unfolding without beginning or end. All has evolved out of an uncaused cause which is postulated (by Samkhya) in order to evade the fallacy of *regressus ad infinitum* which is not consistent with a rational solution".

The Samkhya leaves the uncaused cause undefined as being impossible to be conceived by the intellect. "This absolute is beyond time, beyond space, beyond thought; it is without difference, without attribute, and without form. It is for ever removed from empirical knowledge which concerns itself with the phenomenal world."[13]

According to the Samkhya there are two enternal, permanent and immutable principles in nature, namely *prakriti* and *purusha*. Prakriti in Sanskrit is composed of the prefix *pra* "before or first" and the root *kr* "to make or produce". In Samkhya the term means that which existed before anything was produced, the primary source of all things, the original substance from which all things have come and into which all things will eventually return. Prakriti is also called *pradhana* "primary matter" and *avyakta* "non-manifest matter." The phenomenal universe is considered as a dynamic order, an enternal process of unfolding, without beginning or end.

For the sake of analysis, the Samkhya divides the process of cosmic evolution into twenty-five categories which are classified under four headings; 1. That which is neither produced nor produces, 2. that which is not produced but produces, 3. those which are produced and do produce and 4. those which are produced and do not produce.

Prakriti is established on purely logical grounds. The central argument used by the Samkhya system is that something cannot come out of nothing. This view is technically called *satkarya-vada* and is the distinguishing feature of this system. On the basis of this principle the material universe is traced back to a first cause which is prakriti.

The existence of prakriti is supported by the following arguments: 1. The effect subsists since what is non-existent cannot be brought into existence by the operation of cause. 2. The effect must have existed in the cause, because whatever does not exist can never be brought into existence, 3. The effect must have existed in the cause, because every effect has

its appropriate material cause, e. g. when butter is wanted milk is sought, not water. 4. The effect must have existed in the cause, because there must be a causal relationship between things that exist; otherwise any cause could produce any result. 5. The effect must be potentially contained in the cause because only a particular cause can produce a particular effect ; otherwise any cause could produce any effect. and 6. The effect must have existed in the cause because the effect is not different from the cause.

The prakriti is composed of three *gunas* (qualities) called *sattva* (goodness, joy) *rajas* (passion, pain) and *tamas* (darkness, sloth). Being inherent in nature the *gunas* are the lever of all operations which cause the natural phenomena. Prakriti is thus the cause of the universe and its functioning through the gunas.

Purusha has no function but, as pure consciousness, is a passive spectator of the working of prakriti. The gunas create the realm of experience as well as account for the process that enables purusha to be the experiencer. All knowledge which is gained through perception and inference together with its objects belong to the realm of gunas and are independent of purusha. The reality of the world, therefore, rests on the principle entirely unrelated to the spiritual entity. The Samkhya thus reduces all the psychic functions like ideas, perceptions, will, as well as passions, to mechanical processes. Moksha, as a state of final goal is not a state of bliss as held by the Vedanta, but is simply a state in which there is separation of purusha from involvement with the prakriti. The moment purusha wrongly identifies itself with the manifestations of prakriti such as emotions, feelings, passions, desires, it must suffer the joys and miseries of the mind-body system. Therefore, the realization of the pure and separate nature of purusha and its distinction from prakriti is the highest goal—the release from the never-ending cycle of births and deaths. This is the real moksha as taught by the Samkhya. The ethical goal of the Samkhya is not a spiritual enhancement of personality but the extinction of individuality.

Kapila says that whatever is non-existent can never be made existent and whatever is existent cannot be made totally

non-existent ; it amounts to saying that something cannot emerge from nothing. He insists that effect already exists in the cause. In this view a thing can be produced but never created. By asserting that "a thing is not made out of nothing" Kapila exploded the Brahmin theory of creation. Existing enternally by itself, the universe does not need a creator nor does it have a beginning because in that case too something would be supposed to come out of nothing.

The Samkhya rejected the atomist theory on the ground that pain and pleasure cannot be the properties of the atom ; every mental state that exists is an aggregate of pain, pleasure, delusion etcetera in varying degrees ; therefore it must be explained by a more intelligent theory. The Samkhya system with its rigid rationalism could not, however, stand without accepting the material substratum of the world. The rejection of the atomic theory could not lead to the repudiation of materialism ; it merely tried to avoid some logical fallacies in the physical explanation of the world given by the Vaisheshakas. The all-pervasive primal substance conceived by the Samkhya obviates the difficulty confronted by the Vaisheshakas of visualizing the original combination and of securing the first impulse to function. Thus together with Vaisheshka, the Samkhya system also reduced the gross elements to atoms ; only Kapila went further and traced the severally existing atoms down to still simpler all-prevading substance. This was no rejection of materialism but in fact a surprising anticipation of the twentieth century conception of substance in New Physics.

A mechanist conception of the nature is logically inherent in the Samkhya system ; it becomes explicit in the definition of the properties of the prakriti which is another name for the all-pervading material substratum of the universe. Kapila visualises motion as inherent in the prakriti. Thus purusha or the metaphysical element becomes superfluous, the system being self-contained as a mechanist-materialist conception of the world.

It is debatable whether the idealistic conception of purusha was the creation of Kapila or was introduced into the Samkhya system by others who lived long after the founder. Says

Chattopadhyaya : "We want to point out that this anomalous position of the *purusha* in original Samkhya remained its greatest weakness ; it provided an easy opportunity to the latter thinkers to introduce alien ideas into the system. The author of the *Karika* and more conspicuously the later writers on the Samkhya as Gaudapada, Aniruddha and Vijnana Bhikshu tried their very best to introduce this concept of the *purusha* into the Samkhya system and thus virtually to make a Vedanta of it."[14]

The original Samkhya system divested purusha of all qualities and every active property which was ascribed to *pradhana* or *prakriti* as the Final Cause of all that exists. Kapila even posited understanding, mind, reason, ego (*ahankar*) as products of Nature. Purusha is left without any activity, a mere spectator with no power to interfere in the working of the prakriti. Obviously it is needless to retain its existence. But purusha's mere presence is said to excite the prakirti to move. Perhaps this empty conception of Kapila (if he and not his followers introduced it) was a concession to contemporary prejudice of the Brahminical society. In this he was no more blameworthy than the great scientist Issac Newton, or the famous philosopher Emmanuel Kant. As M. N. Roy has pointed out : "Leibniz complained that Newton had robbed God of all his attributes and undermined the foundation of religion. Yet Newton himself was a profoundly religious man, steeped in theological prejudices. In his old age, he composed some very silly theological treatise."[15] At another place Roy observes : "Kant did not blush to proclaim that he must set aside science in order to make room for faith. Yet, his 'all-shattering' critical philosophy has swept away all the debris of medieval speculation. His monumental work on the theory of Newton had driven God away even from the precarious position conceded by the latter."[16]

Essentially, Samkhya is a monistic philosophy. But the introduction of purusha, however functionless, has affected its character and made it dualistic though it is true that both prakriti and purusha are recognised to be *anadi* (beginningless) and *avinashi* (indestructible).

The controversy about the true meaning and content of the Samkhya philosophy has raged unabated through the centuries. Attempts have been made to resolve the ambiguity and to restore its monistic claim. "The dualism in the thinking of the Samkhya was, however, removed by a commentator of Kapila's *Sutra* by saying : 'These two (Nature and soul) are alike without antecedent, like seed and sprout of which it is needless to ask which is the first ; the old puzzle which was the first, the acorn or the oak ? being a frivolous question.' Either simultaneous existence of the two uncreated beings is admitted, or soul ceases to exist except as an attribute of Nature."[17]

The Samkhya makes no attempt to prove the existence of *Ishvara* (God) on the ground that not only such proof is unavailable, but also that for the system there is no necessity for positing such a Supreme Being. One can achieve liberation (*moksha*) without the blessing of God. "The Samkhya philosophy is, in its essence", wrote R. Garbe, "not only atheistic but also inimical to Vedas. All appeals to *sruti* in the Samkhya texts lying before us are subequent additions. We may altogether remove the Vedic elements grafted upon the system, and it will not in the least be affected thereby. The Samkhya philosophy is original and has remained so up to the present day, unchanged in its contents, un-Vedic and independent of the Brahminical tradition."[18]

The Samkhya developed what may be called the rationalist-naturalist system of metaphysics. The real merit of Kapila's philosophy lies in his acceptance of the objective reality of the physical world. He emphatically rejected the doctrine that external world has no objective existence and nothing exists but idea or pure consciousness. The underlaying principle of his theory of knowledge is identical with the modern materialistic principle that consciousness is determined by being.

While Vaishashaka was inclined towards materialism, the Samkhya tended to espouse atheistic-naturalism. "Man could conquer Nature if he studied and undertood it", emphasised the Samkhya teachers. It was a very significant evolution in Indian thought and led to discovery of scientific truths. Debi-

prasad Chattopadhyaya says that "original Samkhya was a form of uncompromising atheism and materialism. It was persistently called *nirisvara pradhana-karna vada*, (the godless doctrine of primordial matter)...It was because of this that the Samkhya system could provide our philosophical tradition with the fundamental ideas of positive science. The most important of these are a theory of matter, a theory of causalty, a theory of knowledge and a theory of evolutionary process."[19]

India gave birth to two intellectual giants in the most creative period of its cultural history—Kanada and Kapila. As stated above the Samkhya system deviated largely from the strictly materialist ground ; it rejected the atomist theory of the Vaisheshaka; its emphasis was on rationalist-naturalist system of metaphysics. Kanada was a more confirmed materialist. But the dominating position in the intellectual life of post-Vedic India was occupied by the Samkhya outlook. It was the first serious challenge to idealist philosophy and by threatening Brahminical religion shook the ancient Indian society to its foundation.

There is some justification in the claim of later Samkhya teachers that their doctrines are derived from the Vedas and the Upanishads. As A. B. Keith says while dealing with the system : "There is, in detail, in the Samkhya, little that cannot be found in the Upanishads in some place or another." Nevertheless, the idealist Brahmins were apprehensive of the Samkhya's materialst implications. They detested the system and opposed its revolutionary doctrines, tooth and nail. "It is significant to note", writes Ruth Reyna, "that the early Samkhya doctrine was at first regarded as heterodox and no Brahmin teacher of the Vedic line appears among the expounders of this school. However, as the Samkhya philosophers took up the dualistic and realistic elements of the Upanishads and gradually strengthened the emphasis on these aspects spiritualising the conception of the relationship between the life-matter and the life-monad, bringing to fruition the classical Samkhya-yoga, the evolved form eventually became acceptable to Brahmin orthodoxy."[20]

This recognition was accorded under compulsion occasioned by the popularity of the Samkhya doctrines in the intellectual classes. At heart, the Brahmins have never forgiven Kapila. Badrayana compiling his *Brahma Sutra* (to which detailed reference will be made later) in the third century A.C., gave systematic expression to this hatred. After an elaborate refutation of the Samkhya doctrines, Badrayana claimed that by doing so he had disproved all theories other than his own.[21] Later, in the ninth century, A.C., Shankaracharya elaborating Badrayana's assertion, added : "By the conquest of the most dangerous adversary, *pradhanamalla*, (literally "chief wrestler") the conquest of the minor enemies is already virtually accomplished." Discussing heretic views in fifth century B.C., the lawgiver Baudhayana was probably alluding to Brahmin detestation of Kapila when he warned that "striving with the gods, he (Kapila) made these divisions. A wise man should not take heed of him."[22]

6. YOGA

The word *yoga* comes from the root *yajur* "to unite" and signifies the union of the *jivatman* (individual soul) with *Parmatman* (Universal Soul). The system suggests certain methods in the shape of the yogic practices which can bring about such a union. *Yoga* is mostly identified with *samadhi* (concentration) of mind to the extent of obliterating any distinction between the subject and the object when the consciousness of the embodied-self becomes one with the Supreme Self, thus enabling the individual to regain its pure, free and eternal status.

One purpose—now perhaps the main purpose—of the Yoga is to free the individual from pain which is of three kinds :

1. that arising from one's own infirmities and wrong conduct occasioned by vulgar desires and excesses in living.
2. that born of one's relations with other living things.
3. that brought about by external nature like elements and other invisible, abstract and subtle forces.

The Yoga system has a philosophy and an art. Though non-attachment to the world and gaining restraint over the

waywardness of mind are the means suggested to get rid of pain yet absolute union of the individual soul with the Universal Soul is the basic theory of Yoga philosophy.

Yoga holds that all the manifest and unmanifest in the universe comes from one source which is Divine Intelligence ; that man is only a spark of It and by the practice of Yoga he is able to get a glimpse of the Intelligence which achievement bestows on him all knowledge, all wisdom, all power and all there is in the seen and unseen universe.

The art of Yoga is defined as a system of culture for perfecting human efficiency. It is claimed that the art helps to destroy the defects of the body and mind, to establish health and bestow happiness as well as to develop intelligence and reveal true knowledge of Self.

The teachings and techniques of the Yoga system have been accumulated through a ceaseless flow of adepts who have handed it down from generation to generation.

The system had its beginnings in the dim past. *Yagnyavalka Smriti* records that Herinyagarbha was the first teacher who introduced the philosophy and initiated the practices. But Patanjali who lived sometime before Christian Era and wrote the *Yoga Sutra* is commonly considered to be the father of the school. He gave the present literary form to the Yoga doctrines, and he has confessed to the fact that his is "a new and recognised text of the Yoga." As in the case of other old masters very little is known about Patanjali's life. Some writers have stated that he is the same person who wrote *Mahabhashya* on Panani's grammar of ancient Sanskrit but this is controversial.

The *Yoga Sutra* which is the authoritative treatise on the system is in four parts :

1. The first part called *samadipada* contains 51 aphorisms which discuss the nature of *samadhi* (concentration).

2. The second part of 55 aphorisms known as *sadhanapada* explains the means by which the goal of the yogic practices may be attained.

3. The third part of 54 aphorisms called *vibhuti pada* teaches how to acquire supernatural powers (*vibhutis*).

4. The fourth and the last part contains 34 aphorisms and deals with the final liberation of the individual. It is called *kaivalya pada.*

The philosophical basis of the Yoga is the Samkhya. The teachers of both the systems have tried to show that the individual is but the microcosm of the macrocosm. The only difference between Samkhya and Yoga is that while the former pertains to the universal condition of nature, the latter is concerned with the individual condition of man. The Yoga system maintains that the gross individual must have a subtle aspect from which it manifests itself and to which it will ultimately return. This subtle aspect is no other than a spark of the divine and is the main concern of the Yoga.

The opening sentence of the *Yoga Sutra* says : *yogah chittavriti-nirodah* (Yoga consists in the deliberate stopping of the spontaneous activities of the mind stuff).

Originally, the Yoga system was not given the status of a philosophy ; it consisted of certain practices of body and discipline of mind which, it was claimed, enabled a follower to direct the flow of life energies through body organs, and then by withdrawing the same energies to inner spheres one could experience the external world at will. It is by withdrawing consciousness (*chitta*) from all natural attachments that the higher level of the same faculty (consciousness) is reached. Then there is no more experience of pain and sorrow and disappointment. Thus one can escape rebirths and attain liberation.

Closely examined, many practices recommended by the Yoga resemble the ecstatic rites of the savage people in which all sorts of manoeuvres are undertaken with the hope of acquiring supernatural powers but only end in creating morbid mental states. There are traces in the Vedic hymns of these ecstatic rites which must have been borrowed from the non-Vedic primitive Indians. A. E. Gough explains in his *Philosophy of the Upanishads :* "It is from the semi-savage races with which they (the Vedic-worshippers) were coalescing, and which they were elevating, that they now adopted the practice of fixing the body and limbs in statue-like repose, and

including cataleptic rigidity, and insensibility, as a higher state than a normal state of human life—the practice known as the Yoga—union, ecstasy, the melting away of the consciousness into a state of characterless indetermination. The process seems to be accompanied with intervals of morbid, nervous and cerebral exaltation, in which the self-torture loses all distinction between perception and imagination, and appears to himself and others to be invested with superhuman powers."[23]

That such primitive bodily practices affecting mental states are not peculiar to ancient Indian society can be seen from what Taylor wrote in his *Primitive Culture* : "Throughout the lower civilisation, men believe, with the most vivid and intense belief, in the objective reality of human spectres which they see in sickness or exhaustion, under the influence of mental excitement or of narcotic drugs. One main reason of the practice of fasting, penance, narcotising, and other means of bringing on morbid exaltation is that the patients may obtain the sight of spectral beings, from whom they look to gain spiritual knowledge, and even worldly power."[24]

It will be recalled that during the Vedic period the Brahmins had introduced besides performance of *yajna* (sacrifice), the practice of *tapas* (self-torture) to acquire extraordinary mental powers. The Yoga system made further additions to the theory of *tapas.* Patanjali lays down eight disciplines essential for an aspirant to self-realisation : 1. *yama* (self-restraint), 2. *niyama* (self-culture), 3. *asana* (right posture), 4. *pranayama* (control of vital force), 5. *pratyahara* (self-withdrawal), 6. *dharna* (concentration), 7. *dhyana* (contemplation) and 8. *samadhi* (meditation). Breath control is regarded as steadying influence on the mind as by thus inhaling and exhaling air the body becomes light and the mind attains the state of steadiness. These disciplines were developed into practice of excessive self-torture undertaken for the sake of acquiring imagined supernatural powers. Patanjali's description of the *vibhutis* (supernatural powers) which can be achieved by a perfect yogi point to this. D. D. Kosambi remarks : "Tribal medicine man's rites left marks upon ascetic life in the form of punishing observances :

total abstinence from food and water for incredible periods, control of breath, maintaining excessively contorted bodily postures—all these and many other senseless exercises were supported to confer extraordinary powers. It was thought that true adepts could become invisible or fly through the air at will. Later Yoga practices and physical poses developed from this. Yoga within limits is a good system of exercise in a hot climate for people who do not live by muscular exertion and hard physical labour. The most that one can attain by it is some measure of control over normally involuntary functions of the body and good health, but no supernatural power."[24]

Kumarila Bhatta, the famous Mimamsa teacher, clearly saw the danger hidden in the Yoga system by fantastic claims of attaining supernatural powers. He declared that there was nothing unique about the experiences yielded by Yogic practices ; it was the subjective fancy of the follower of the system and carried no validity for philosophy ; as such these experiences were quite useless. The Yoga system, however, came to have an abiding place in the Indian society. "The best proof of the practical nature of Yoga," writes Bernard, "and the extent of its influence is the fact that every system of religion in India and every school of philosophy has recognised Yoga as the most scientific means of realising philosophic truths."

The Yoga teachers seemed to believe that in their system *Ishavara* (God) had little work to do. They argued : "Man can achieve spiritual elevation and liberation by his own skills and there is no need to take recourse to God for attainment of the goal." Patanjali has said that devotion to God is an optional pratice for those who would follow Yoga. Theism is not a vital part of the system. But the *acharyas* (teachers) of the Yoga who followed Patanjali like Bhoja, Nagesha Bhatta and Narayan Bhikshu took pains to present it as an orthodox system cherishing faith in the Supreme Being. Vijnana Bhikshu interpreted the Yoga doctrines in a way as to make them out as another form of the Vedanta.

There is little in common between original Samkhya and Yoga. Yet they are bracketed together in the six schools of Indian

philosophy. This must have happened in later centuries when the Yoga teachers accepted the dual principle of prakriti and purusha. But basic difference still remained. While Samkhya holds that knowledge is the way to salvation, Yoga insists that active striving or dutiful action in a spirit of disinterestedness is the proper method to attain that goal. It is claimed even to this day that "there is no knowledge equal to the Samkhya and no power equal to the Yoga."

5

Flowering of Thought

THE seventh and sixth centuries B.C. witnessed in India, as in Greece, an intellectual ferment. Dissatisfaction with the Vedic natural religion gave rise to speculations about the origin of the universe and things contained in it, including human life. Mostly, the speculations turned towards metaphysics and found an answer in some sort of monotheistic religion. There were, however, some individuals and schools of thinkers in Indian society who boldly refused to feel frightened by the awe of natural phenomena and dared to unravel the mysteries of Nature by looking into its face. They unceremoniously set aside not only mythical gods of the Vedas but also the Supreme Being (Brahman) of the Upanishads. They endeavoured to know the causes of the phenomena and sought them not in imaginary existences but in the Nature itself. Thus the foundations of real philosophy were laid and laid well.

In India, philosophy has come to mean wild guesses, mystic beliefs and fanciful dreams unrelated to reality of worldly life. It was not so in the glorious period of history which we are now considering. Thoughtful Indians then believed that philosophy was a theory of life which explained nature and man's own being in relation to his surroundings. Unlike theology, real philosophy taught man to solve problems of life

in the light of past experience so that he could build his future according to his will and the worldly needs.

The Vedic age was coming to a close, We have seen that out of the six orthodox schools of Indian Philosophy no less than four (Vaisheshaka, Nyaya, Samkhya and Yoga) tended to be materialist-rationalist in outlook. But since in course of time they more or less compromised with the orthodox viewpoint by unnecessarily introducing idealistic element into their systems, they were finally, albeit reluctantly, accorded recognition by the Brahmins. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that the atomist theory of the Vaisheshaka and the Pradhana doctrine of the Samkhya gave impetus to free thinking; Kanada and Kapila became the forerunners of the rise of Indian Philosophy. The two titans were soon followed by bolder thinkers who made no compromises and unsparingly rejected the Vedic gods, Brahminical traditions, sacrifices, rituals and ceremonies as well as the monotheistic beliefs of the Upanishads.

There arose early in the sixth century B.C. an order of *Paribrajakas* (literally "the wanderers") who were intellectuals devoted to search after truth. They left their homes and went from place to place meeting common men and spreading heretic ideas among them. All the time the wanderers would have had also free exchange of ideas among themselves. Unmindful of the opposition from the orthodox sections, they challenged prevalent notions and cherished beliefs, generated an atmosphere of free-thought and prepared the ground for an intellectual revolution. "The majority of the wanderers, and the most influential individuals among them are not Brahmins", points out Rhys Davids, "and the general impression conveyed by the texts is that the wanderers and other non-priestly teachers were quite as much, if not more, esteemed than the Brahmins by the whole people—kings, nobles, officials, merchants, artisans and peasantry."[1]

The movement of the paribrajakas spread far and wide in Northern India; they were accepted as the harbingers of a new age. "Just as the strolling students in pre-reformation times throughout Western Europe were both a sign of the coming change, and also helped largely to bring it about, so the conditions which made it possible for the wanderers in Northern India

to live as they did, in pursuit of what they thought to be truth, were the precursors of the movement of thought, we now call Buddhism which the wanderers also so largely helped to bring about."[2] Paribrajakas were like sophists of ancient Greece whose sole interest consisted in freely and exhaustively arguing about the problems of life and essence of the universe.

With growing keenness to hear the paribrajakas, the people in cities and towns built meeting places where the wandering disputants were received with honour. "We hear of halls put up for their accommodation, for the discussion by them of their beliefs. Such was 'The Hall' in queen Mallika's park at Savatthi, and the 'Gabled Pavilion' put up by the Lichhavi clan in the 'Great Wood' adjoining their capital at Vesali, and often mentioned in the books as the resort of the wanderers. Or a special space was set apart for them in the groves adjoining the settlement; such were the sweet-smelling 'Champala Grove' on the borders of the lake dug by Queen Gaggara at Champa, the Mora-nivapa, the place where the peacocks were fed, at Rajagaha and others."[3]

In course of time, the paribrajakas formed themselves into organised monastic associations. There were many of them including the two which came to be known in history as Jainas and Buddhists. Ajivakas was another famous association of the paribrajakas. We shall presently have to say a lot more about all the three.

Sufficient information is not available about the paribrajaka movement and their various orders which flourished temporarily on the eve of Buddhist revolution; but it is known that among other orders there were : 1. *Munda-Savaka* (the disciples of Shavelinga), 2. *Jatilaka* (those who wear their hair in braids), 3. *Magandika* (members of a corporate body, Manda), 4. *Tendandika* (the bearers of the triple staff), 5. *Aviruddhaka* (followers of Buddha's cousin Devadatta who opposed Buddhist order), and 7. *Deva dhammika* (followers of Deva).

The paribrajaka movement divided the Indian intellectuals roughly into two sects, *astikas* (believers) and *nastikas* (non-believers). Generally, those who continued to repose faith in the Vedas were classified as astikas and the opponents of the holy scripture (*Vedavirodakas*) were addressed as nastikas.

These terms were mainly invented by Brahmins with the purpose of exciting hatred against independent thinkers. "The one (astika) is orthodox while the other (nastika)is heterodox"; says the historian, R. C. Majumdar, "these were the connotations in which the terms were used by Hindu writers who coined them. Heterodoxy however is a relative term. If the rejection of the Vedas is a heterodoxy to a Hindu, rejection of Buddha is equally so to a Buddhist. But as the victor in war dictates the terms of peace, the Hindu meaning of the terms has prevailed in India and the modern writer has no option but to accept them."[4]

Among the paribrajakas a section held nihilistic views and doubted if anything existed at all. Criticising the idealist philosophy of the orthodox Brahmins, the nihilists (*shuni vadins*) stressed : "Since nothing exists except thought, neither does bondage exist, it is useless to talk of liberation. What is, perishes because to perish is the habit of things. The void alone is thus a reality. Since everything that exists perishes and that which is perishable is false, as in a dream, bondage too has merely a momentary existence, is phenomenal and not real. Who can therefore be bound by that?" Not only was the authority of the Vedas challenged by the nihilists but all forms of metaphysical thought were also subjected to ridicule; the denial of gods and of the Supreme Being was stretched to its logical conclusion by denying the existence of everything since it depended on the existence of imaginary metaphysical entities.

The nihilist approach was however negative and it failed to produce any system of positive philosophy. That task was done by another class of paribrajakas called *swabhav vadins* (naturalists) who attempted to explain the natural phenomena in natural terms. Disputing the existence of the Vedic gods they scoffed at the pretensions of the Brahmins. Basically empiricists, they argued that perception was the only source of knowledge as well as the only reliable evidence. The Sanskrit word for perception is *darshan*. Therefore the swabhav vadins came also to be called darshanikas. It is notable that darshanika in Sanskrit soon came to mean a philosopher and the six orthodox

schools mentioned in the previous chapter are called *shat darshanas* or the six philosophies.

Among the nastika systems which arose in India during the period under discussion one, was the Lokayata. It literally means "that which is prevalent among the people" or "that which is essentially this-worldly." Lokayata has been *bete noir* of Brahmins throughout the cultural history of India. When in power the orthodoxy destroyed the vast literature produced by the lokayatikas. The fragments of the doctrines now available are in the shape of distorted quotations made by the idealist philosophers in their writings refuting the Lokayata philosophy which died hard and had to be confronted time and again. "The system assumed various forms of philosophical scepticism, logical fatalism, and religious indifferentism", observe two idealist exponents of Indian philosophy, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore. "Its origin can be traced as far back as the *Rig Veda*. It is mentioned in the Epics as well as in the Dialogues of the Buddha. Even the *Bhagavad-Gita* refers to it. The main work of the system, the *Brahaspati Sutra* (600 B.C.) is not available, and we have to reconstruct the doctrines of (Indian) materialism from statements of the position and criticism of it found in polemical and other works."[5] The earlier Upanishads refer to Lokayata as the views of *asuras* (demons). Judged by the available fragments, the Lokayata metaphysics revolved round matter as the sole reality. It taught that when a body of a living being is formed by a peculiar combination of four elements, namely, earth, fire, water, and air, the spirit automatically comes into existence. With the dissolution of the body life-spark returns to nothingness.

The Lokayata denies the existence of any creator. For it the life-spark is not distinct from the body ; it is identical with the body qualified by intelligence. The author of *Lokayata*, D.P. Chattopadhyaya, remarks : "The most conspicuous feature of this primitive world-outlook appears to be *deha-vada*, the view that the material human body (*deha*) is the microcosm of the universe, along with a cosmogony attributing the origin of the universe to the union of the male and the female."[6] The lokayatikas hold that it is foolish to believe that the forces of

merit and demerit generated by karma determine the lot of the individual.

A younger contemporary of the Buddha, Krishna Misra, succinctly recording the fundamental beliefs of the Lokayata, said : "In it (the lokayata system) only perceptual evidence is the authority. The elements are earth, water, fire and air. Wealth and enjoyment are the objects of human existence. Matter can think. There is no other world. Death is end of all."

As the tradition goes, the first treatise, now extinct, on the doctrines of the Lokayata called the *Lokayata Darshana* was prepared by Brahaspati Laukya or Brahmanspati of *Rig Veda*. Whether he is the same legendary figure known as the preceptor (guru) of the heavenly gods (*devatas*) or some other ancient thinker by that name is difficult to say. But the association of Brahaspati with the heretic views indicates that in the olden days the naturalist rebels against blind faith and orthodoxy must have been held in great veneration.

Be that as it may, the Lokayata philosophy was elaborated and developed into a comprehensive system in later days by the much-maligned Charvaka. The word Charvaka literally means "pleasing speech". Whether this was the real name of the great thinker or was given to him by the Brahmin opponents due to his popularity among the people, is not possible to ascertain. Perhaps Brahaspati and Charvaka are one and the same person. The former might have been his real name and the latter used as a sobriquet. It would seem that the followers of Charvaka were conspicuous for their entertaining talk and persuasive arguments. For that reason they were also nicknamed as "flatterers of the people". Their candour, charity, fellow-feeling and friendliness were drawing towards them multitudes of the simple, honest and unambitious folk.

The Charvakas insisted upon knowing a thing through senses before they could declare it to be real. "The philosophical system of Charvakas stands upon their theory of knowledge", says Dakshinaranjan Bhattacharya. "They maintain that perception is the only means of knowing the truth : That which is amenable to sense perception is true ; beyond perception everything is doubtful. Inference, they say, can not be

taken as a means to right knowledge, for inference involves universal relation (*vyapti*) which is not perceived."[7] The Charvakas recognise only four kinds of primary elements, viz, earth, water, air and fire because they can be perceived or felt by the senses ; these are beginningless and eternal. According to them the four elements constitute tiny particles which are not, however, the invisible atoms of the Vaisheshakas. The particles accepted by the Charvakas are visible particles for they rejected anything that could not be perceived by the senses. P.T. Raju puts the core of Charvaka philosopoy in these words : "There is no external cause for the four elements coming together and obtaining the qualities of life and consciousness. It is their nature to come together and to have those qualities. But we cannot generalize on this process and establish a law that, whenever these four elements come together in certain ratio, life and consciousness will emerge. The elements may change their nature any time. We cannot, therefore say that Nature contains some eternal laws. Every event is a chance, and if it develops into something, then it develops according to its particular nature. One may conclude that, according to the Charvakas, the existence of everything is a chance, and that there are no laws of Nature, but every object has its own nature."[8]

Ether (akasha) was not accepted by the ancient Charvakas as an element because ether is imperceptible. All beings animate or inanimate are the products of the elementary principles of matter. "The body itself is the soul. In the expressions like 'I am stout', etc., 'I' certainly does not mean any thing other than the body. With the dissolution of the body consciousness disappears and each of its constituent elements is mingled with its kind leaving behind only ashes and dust. Transmigration of soul, retribution etc., are therefore meaningless words."[9]

The Charvakas laughed at the notion that because the four Vedas were a divinely revealed truth therefore they commanded our respect. They said : "The Vedas are no authority. There are mantras in the Vedas which do not convey any meaning whatsoever ; some mantras are ambiguous ; some are absurd, some are contradictory ; some repeat what is already known.

As regards the other portions of the Vedas we always find discrepancies and contradictions among them. Cases are not rare where one action prescribed by one text is condemned by another."[10] Since the truth can never be known except through the use of the senses any claim of revelation was a myth and any idea of soul or God mere delusion. "God cannot be said to be the judge of our merits and demerits, because otherwise he would be guilty of partiality and cruelty. There is no such God as the Supreme Author and Governor of this world, but the only god is the earthly king, the ruler of the State, the arbiter of right and wrong in the society."[11]

But Charvakas were not merely nihilists, sceptics or atheists; they developed an elaborate system of positive philosophical thought. "We must admit", says P.T. Raju, "that the Charvaka theory is not exactly scepticism or agnosticism, but a fairly thorough going positivism. They accept the reality of whatever we can perceive with our senses and deny the reality of whatever we cannot perceive. We should note also that they did not deny the formal validity of inference, because they used the very laws of inference to show that we could not obtain material truths about the world through inference. They questioned only how we could obtain the major premises, but they did not say that even if we had the major premises inference was wrong. They did not criticise the structure of the syllogism, but only wanted to show that it was utterly useless for obtaining any new truth about the world. In fact they used the law of contradiction in refuting the doctrines of their rivals."[12]

The Charvaka logic however does not conceive the inductive leap from the known to the unknown. Immediate knowledge through perception is its basic theory. Generally, it discounts the validity of inference. Naren Bhattacharya says : "The Charvakas think that the concept of something supernatural is based upon inferential knowledge. Supernaturalism cannot claim validity on the ground that inference is always a false system of logic. Everything of this phenomenal world is a natural creation. The conception of an almighty God is illogical. If God really exists, why then does he not appear before men to end all doubts."[13]

The Charvakas denounced religion in all forms. To them prayer is the weapon of men who are weak and without will-power to do anything. "Worship is an insincere egoism to save oneself from the tortures of hell ; prophets are the greatest liars among men."[14]

The Charvakas did not believe in the caste-system ; the ideal brotherhood is not an utopia in their eyes ; it can be realized. They held that "not only is a materialistic ethics possible, but also that materialist morality is the noblest form of morality."

Some attempts are being made now to reconstruct the views of the Charvakas without distortion as far as possible. Giving a brief summary of Indian materialist thought, M.N. Roy has stated the philosophy of Charvaka in these words :

> All phenomena are natural. Neither in experience nor in history do we find any interposition of supernatural forces. Matter is the only reality ; the mind is matter that thinks. The hypothesis of a creator is useless for explaining or understanding the world. Men think religion necessary only because, being accustomed to it, they feel a sense of loss and an uncomfortable void when the growth of knowledge destroys faith. Morality is natural ; it is a social convention and convenience, not a divine command. There is no need to control instincts and emotions ; they are commands of nature. The purpose of life is to live ; and the only wisdom is happiness.[15]

The contribution of highest significance which the Charvakism made to Indian Philosophy was the justification it supplied to any kind of action in pursuit of happiness. "The spiritualist philosophers of India may be called pessimists", observes Dakshinaranjan Bhattacharya, "in as much as they run after heaven or liberation and try to get rid of the sorrows and miseries of wordly life. But the materialists are always optimistic. They do not hold the view that this world is full of misery. They hold that pleasure in this world is the only thing which is true and good. The only reasonable end of man is enjoyment—gratification of his senses (*kama evaika purushartha*."[16]

The Charvaka philosophy was a valuable outcome of the intellectual ferment of the 6th century B.C. in ancient India. It

flourished for over a thousand years and influenced the thinking of the people right down to the days of the Guptas. In the Ayodhya Kanda of the Hindu epic, *Ramayana*, is described a meeting of the hero, Rama, with one Jabali of Charvaka persuasion. The latter patronisingly admonishes the former thus : "O my son, you are guided by false logic ; knowledge other than experience is not reliable. The fools always think in terms of the other world. People wrongly celebrate the *ashtika shradha* (oblation to manes) for their deceased fathers. It is mere wastage of rice. Can dead men eat ? There is no ultimate gain in worship, sacrifice and meditation. The *shastras* (scriptures) are meant to befool the people. Therefore, O Rama, there is nothing in the world called *dharma* ; follow which is direct and immediate, do not run after uncertainty."

The doctrines of the revolutionary thinker could not have become ineffective even as late as the fourteenth century A.C. for we find the Vedantist Madhavacharya while writing his compendium, *Sarva Darshana Samgraha*, a commentary on different Indian philosophical systems, dealing with Charvakism in the first chapter. Madhava calls Charvaka "the crest jewel of the atheistic schools" and "a follower of the doctrines of Brahaspati." He no doubt refutes the views of the atheists but is forced to add that the efforts of Charvaka are indeed hard to be eradicated (*duru chchedam hi charvakasya chestitam*).

Madhava not unexpectedly presents the Charvaka doctrines in somewhat distorted shape in the following words :

> There is no heaven, no final liberation, nor any soul in another world. There is no other hell ; mundane pain is produced purely by mundane causes as thorns etc. The Veda is tainted by three faults of untruth, self-contradiction and tautology. The *agnihotra*, the three Vedas, the ascetic's three staves and smearing one's self with ashes were made by nature as a livelihood of those destitute of knowledge and manliness. If a beast slain in *Jyotishtoma* rite will itself go to heaven, why then does not the sacrificer forthwith offer his own father ? If the *shradhha* (oblation offering) produces gratification to beings who are dead, then here, too, in the case of travellers when they start, it is needless to give provisions

for the journey. While life remains, let a man live happily, let him feed on ghee even though he runs on debt ; when once the body becomes ashes, how can it ever return again ? for the dissolution of the body is the only liberation. If he who departs from the body goes to another world, how is it that he comes not back again restless for the lives of his kindred ? Hence it is only as a means of livelihood that the Brahmins have established all the ceremonies of the dead ; there is no other fruit anywhere.[17]

The Charvaka was the most hated of the philosophical systems in the eyes of the Brahmins. They not only tried to destroy the literature produced by the Charvaka School but also wrote numerous treatises refuting the heretical doctrines which were, in their view, detrimental to the interests of mankind. "The original works of the Charvaka School are now lost to us. Some fragments of views and utterances which are lying scattered in different works of the Hindus, Buddhists, and Jainas form the basis of our knowledge of the System."[18] Apart from *Sarva Darshana Samgrahana*, the Charvaka philosophy has been dealt with and denounced in many other books of the Brahmins. Among these mention may be made of *Sada darshana Samuchhaya* of Haribhadra Suri, *Tattva Sangraha* of Shanti Rakshita, *Prabodha Chandrodaya* of Krishna Misra, *Advaita Brahma Siddhi* of Sadananda, *Sarva Siddhanta Samgraha* of Shankara and *Khandan Khadya Khadaka* of Sri Harsha. References to the Lokayata and other materialist schools of Indian thought can also be traced in the *Artha Shastra* of Kautilya, the *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana and *Padampurana* as well as in the writings of Arya Deva, Gunaratna, Vachaspati Misra, Bhaskaracharya, Nila Kantha and Madhusudana.[19]

There is only one systematic work written by Jayarashi Bhatta in seventh century A.C. entitled *Tattvopaplava Simha* (The Lion that Devours all Categories) which does some justice to the philosophy of Charvaka. Assessing its value, Dr. Radhakrishnan and Moore say: "The *Tattvopaplava Simha* (seventh century A.D.) is the only extant treatise which may be considered an authentic text of the school. It is an 'upsetting of all principles', that is, a polemical treatise against all the other schools of Indian Philosophy."[20] But by and large pervertion

and misrepresentation of Charvaka views has been the general rule with the Brahmin writers. If their expositions are received uncritically we should think that this great philosopher of ancient India was an ignoramus, a dullard, a brawling cad, a scorner of all culture, a sensualist, a friend of anarchy, an incoherent thinker, a moral invalid and an egoistic hedonist. Vulgar views have been generally attributed to him by his orthodox opponents. "But it seems unlikely", says Dakshiniaranjan Bhattacharya, "that a person who was otherwise held in high esteem should encourage any licentious conduct and anti-social behaviour. The accomplished followers of Brahaspati (Charvaka) emphatically discouraged forceful adultery. They were quite alive to the need of social discipline. The title *ganapati* (party leader) of Brahaspati and the *Lokayata* (prevalent among men) nomenclature of the system and the dictum-*loka sidda bhavet raja* (the ruler of a state should be duly recognized by the people) testify to this view. The Charvakas were advocates of human equality. According to them as the blood of the same red hue runs through the veins of Brahmana as well as a *chandala* (outcaste), each is equally entitled to the opportunities of pleasure, the summum bonum of life."[21]

In later days the Charvakas made some additions and modifications to *swabhava vada* and *dehavada*. The followers of the system were divided into various sects like *dhurta* (clever), *vitundavadin* (scoffers), *tattopaplavāvadin* (debators of categories), and *sushikta* (learned). We need not go into the details of the views held by the various groups. It may, however, be noted that the common belief of all the sects was that it is material life of man that determines his thinking and behaviour.

Charvaka has been compared with the Greek philosopher Epicurus (342-270 B.C.) because of the many similarities in their doctrines. Both agree in identifying body with soul. According to Epicurus soul is a corporeal substance, a compound of atoms of four different species distributed throughout the frame but more densely massed in the breast. Charvaka says that four elements are combined and transformed into the human body. Both hold that all mental pleasures are derived from and related to the bodily pleasures. The two considerably agree again as to the end of life. Epicurus says repeatedly

that pleasure and pain are the sole motives of our action ; that pain must be avoided and pleasure pursued. He says that pleasure is the highest good and pain the worst evil. In this Charvaka fully agrees with the Greek philosopher. For him pleasure is the aim of life ; adversity is hell. Epicurus and Charvaka have strongly influenced the thinking of their respective countrymen for many centuries ; but while Epicurianism survived the Catholic onslaught in Europe and became the inspirer of the European Renaissance, Charvakism was defeated in India by the rise of neo-Brahminism (to be discussed later) which has held the stage since the fourth century A.C. and continues to do so till this day.

The Charvaka's age was a glorious period of free and unfettered thought in this country. The great thinker was succeeded by his two outstanding disciples Payasi and Purandar. "The voice of Charvak", says Bhattacharya concluding his thesis on the ancient materialist philosopher, "was the voice of revolt—of protest against the age-long superstitions and prejudices that had denied freedom of thought. It was an invitation for enjoying the beauties of life unperturbed by the ideas of heaven, hell or God. In the domain of philosophy the questions and doubts raised by the Charvakas set problems for all the other schools, made them think more carefully and saved them from much dogmatism. Every philosopher in India had to satisfy the Charvakas before establishing his own view. Thus the contribution of this school to the development of Indian Philosophy is very great."[22]

Charvaka was at one and the same time the most revered and the most reviled of all founders of philosophical schools in India. Like Epicurus it was his fate "to be named if condemned, unnamed if approved."[23]

The work done by the Charvakas prepared the ground for rise of two world-known religions, namely, Jainism and Buddhism. Both have acknowledged their debt to the rationalist-materialist philosophers in evolving their own systems. The Jaina scriptures state that no fewer than 363 heretic schools were functioning during the lifetime of Mahavira, founder of Jainism ; the Buddhist texts gives the number as 62. When Buddha was a young man living as a prince in the palace of

his father, the innumerable halls and vast forests of eastern and northern India were echoeing with the heretic assertions of the paribrajakas denying the divine origin of the Vedas and the authority of the Brahmins, and expounding the theories of agnosticism, atheism and materialism.

It is neither possible nor necessary to study and dilate upon the views held by the various heretic groups, big and small. But to comprehend the process of development in Indian thought prior to the revolution wrought by Buddhism some of the theories held may be summarized.

There was a school called *Akriyavada* which closely followed the Lokayata doctrines and held that "the happiness and sorrow of human beings are caused by the law of nature." It is by an "accidental admixture of elements that a living being comes into existence". The ideas of heaven and hell, sin and virtue etc., are the result of idle speculation."

Another school called *Ajnanavada* preached a form of scepticism. Its propounders believed that a wrong answer to a profound question can mislead others, hence it is unwise to give categorical replies to questions regarding universe and human life. Gautma Buddha is said to have adopted this attitude for he persistently refused to answer questions about the existence of soul.

Ajnanavadins thought that knowledge was essential to arrive at truth ; but knowledge itself is a doubtful category. If knowledge could be beyond doubt there should be no difference of opinion among educated people. But we see that while some say that soul exists others controvert it ; some hold that *jivatman* (soul) has a material form while others assert that it is formless, abstract. Where such sharp differences exist among the philosophers, conclude the Ajnanavadins, how can a right opinion be formed ? It is better to live in darkness than to swim across the so-called flood of light which is mere illusion.

We may next mention *Unchchedvada* which taught that all material beings are subject to destruction ; body and soul have the same material origin ; therefore both perish ; both are composed of four elements—earth, water, fire and air—and must,

therefore suffer the same inevitable fate of destruction as these elements ; the soul is annihilated with the death of the body.

There was a popular and well knit sect of *Swasatavadins* who believed in the eternality of soul but like the Samkhya considered it to be a passive spectator unable to intervene in the functioning of nature.

The last school worthy of mention is *Diththadamanivanavadins*. They said that the final liberation or *nirvana* is possible only by enjoyment of five lusty qualities (*nanchakamguna*) in the form of beauty (*rupa*), juice (*rasa*), sound (*shabda*), smell (*gandha*) and touch (*sparsha*). They rejected the notion of the other world. The ideas are clearly borrowed from Charvaka.

In the vast literature produced by the Buddhists and Jains there are innumerable references to teachers of the heretical schools. But *Samannaphala-Sutta* of *Digha Nikaya* gives an account of six of them which deserve a passing notice.

Purna Kassapa was born a slave who ran away from his master and led a nude life wandering from place to place. He taught that individual soul is a passive spectator and therefore guiltless ; it is unable to act. He said "were he (the soul) to go along the north bank of the Ganga giving alms and offering gifts, performing sacrifices or causing them to be performed, there would be no merit thence resulting and no increase of merit." In generosity, in self-mastery, in control of the senses, in speaking truth there is neither merit nor increase of merit."[24] A person may therefore do anything or cause anyone to do anything but his soul does not act nor cause another to act. Evidently this was the most pessimistic of the views about human life and its destiny.

Another thinker, Pakuda Kachhayama, drew inspiration from the *Prasna Upnishad* which stresses that *anna* (food) is the root of all that exists. Developing his theory, he said that everything in the world is composed of seven original elements—earth, water, fire, air, pleasure, pain and being. These elements are unmade and without any maker ; they are eternal, changeless and motionless. "So there is neither slayer nor causer of slaying, hearer nor speaker, knower nor explainer." If a man cuts off the head of another man with a sharp weapon, by doing so he kills no one, what he really does is that he trans-

forms one element into another ; a sword has only penetrated into the interval between seven elementary substances.[25]

Pakuda has been compared with the Greek philosopher Empedocles (c 500-430 B.C.) who believed that the elements are qualitatively so distinct from one another that there can be no transition from one to the other. Both Pakuda and Empedocles denied the existence of motion and void.

Sanjaya Belathiputta was also a slave by birth and an Ajnanvadin who laid the foundations of secular mode of thought. He refused to be dogmatic and insisted on the principle that a man should possess a fair idea of the limits of his own knowledge before passing a verdict on any matter regarding truth and the universe. He does not deny nor affirm anything. He said : "If you ask me whether or not another world exists and if I think there is another world it is natural that I should say so, but I shall not say so. And If I think there is no other world it is natural that I should say so but I shall not say so. I do not even say that the other world is not of this type or not of that type because I cannot be sure."

There is similarity of thoughts in the teachings of Sanjaya and Greek philosopher Pyrrho (died 275 B.C.) who affirmed that it is impossible to analyse the nature of matter and therefore it is not wise to express opinion on the problems of life and universe. "Pyrrho seems (for very wisely he wrote no books) to have added", says Bertrand Russell, "moral and logical scepticism to scepticism as to the senses. He is said to have maintained that there could never be any rational ground for preferring one course of action to another."[26] That was the view held also by Sanjaya.

A popular thinker of this period was Ajita Keshakambalin also called Makkhali. He was the elder contemporary of the Buddha. Born as a slave who became a philosopher, he exerted tremendous influence on the thinking of the contemporary intelligentsia. His doctrines have been summarised in these words :

> Man is made of four great elements. When he dies the earthly in him returns to the earth, the fluid to the water the heat to the fire, the breath to the air and his facultie,s

> pass into space. The body is carried on the beir, eulogies are uttered in favour of the dead man. Gradually, the bones are bleached and every thing turns into ashes. Fools and wise, both are annihilated on the dissolution of the body and after death they have no existence at all.

To underline his disbelief in religious practices, Ajita added :

> There is no such thing as alms or sacrifice or offering. There is neither fruit nor result of good or evil deeds. There is no such thing as this world or the next. There is neither father nor mother, nor beings springing into life without them. There are in the world no recluses or Brahmans who have reached the highest point, who walk perfectly and who having understood and realised by themselves alone both this world and the next, and there-after make their wisdom known to others.[27]

Ajita held that accidental combination of four elements produces consciousness ; it does not come from outside. Just as a few articles which are non-intoxicant in themselves produce, when mixed, wine which inebriates, similarly elements which are separately non-conscious themselves produce consciousness. For Ajita body and soul were identical ; end of body, therefore, means end of soul.

Both the Buddha and Mahavira benefitted by the rational thoughts of Ajita who taught them to think of reality as a single, indivisible whole.

One of Ajita's disciples was Charvakist Payasi. He was a staunch empiricist and made practical though amusing efforts to seek solution of certain vital problems about life. He earnestly appealed to some virtuous men as well as sinful persons on deathbed to inform him of their fate in the next world. Of course, none obliged him by responding after death. Payasi enquired from many but no one acknowledged that he had seen God. If the other world is better, he argued, why do not religious men commit suicide ? Why can not one see the passing away of soul directly ? Again, if a man, he asked, is buried alive why does not the ground burst out to make passage for the soul's departure ? He therefore concluded that neither soul nor other world existed.

A dominating figure was Maskarin Goshala (Goshala of the "Pilgrim Staff"). He was a contemporary of Mahavira and Buddha. He roamed about completely naked. His philosophy may be briefly stated thus :

> There is no cause, direct or indirect, for happiness or sorrow of a living creature. All beings, animals, men, gods and in fact everything, big and small, are bound to pass through several stages of transmigration. Time is the only agent to effect change; man has nothing at all to do with it. In fullness of time, every object in this world would achieve final liberation (*moksha*).

The fundamental principle of Goshala's philosophy was fate usually called in Sanskrit *niyati* which was raised to the status of the sole motive power of the functioning of the universe and the only agent of all phenomenal change. Goshala was a rigid determinist who used to say that any belief in free-will was a vulgar error.

Goshala's followers were known as *Ajivakas*. "The reference seems to be to Goshala's striking doctrine", says Zimmer, "that as long as the life monad (*a-jiva*) has not completed the normal course of its evolution (running through a fixed number of inevitable births) there can be no realization. The natural biological advance cannot be hurried by means of virtue and asceticism, or delayed because of vice, for the process takes place in its own good time."[28] Ajivakas flourished for many centuries not only all over Northern India but also in some parts of the south. "They still existed as an organised community down to the time of Ashoka's grandson, Dashratha, who gave them, as we learn from the inscriptions on the caves, certain cave hermitages."[29]

Ajivakas were regarded as very dangerous by both the Buddhists and the Jainas ; even while Goshala was alive no words were spared by his opponents in attacks on him. The Buddha declared Goshala's teachings to be the very worst of all the contemporary erroneous doctrines and compared them "to a hempen garment which not only is disagreeable to the skin but yields no protection against either the cold of winter or the heat of summer. That is to say the garment (the doctrine) is simply useless. The reference specifically is to the deter-

minism of Goshala's principal tenet which allowed no place for voluntary human efforts."[30] Buddha refuting Goshala stressed that man has ability to make *virayam* (heroic effort) and there is the possibility of *utsaha* (successful exertion) to get release from vortex of rebirths provided whole-hearted effort is made to that end.

Goshala treated Mahavira as his disciple but they fell out on the issue of fatalism. While the former insisted on the helplessness of man saying that "no divine grace or human zeal can interrupt or interfere with this unalterable principle of bondage, evolution and release", the latter held that "man can wipe out his *karma* (action) by his own efforts".

The ferment in thoughts which threw up so many thinkers in post-Upanishadic period with diverse philosophies and doctrines each contributing some new and inspiring thought, generated conditions for a radical change in the outlook of the Indians. Gautama the Buddha had the genius to envisage the potentialities of the change and introduce a mental revolution.

In his introduction to the *Sacred Books of the East*, Jacobi remarks : "The similarity between some of these heretical doctrines on the one side, and Jaina and Buddhist ideas on the other, is very suggestive, and favours the assumption that Buddha as well as Mahavira owe some of their conceptions to these very heretics and formulated others under the influence of the controversies which were continually going on with them."[31]

6

The Buddhist Revolution

THE free speculation foreshadowed in the Upanishads, the impact of the teachings of thinkers like Kanada and Kapila, followed by the paribrajaka movement with its heretical views and, above all, the spread of Charvaka doctrines loosened the grip of Brahminism on minds of people. The Indian society was now ready to undergo a mental revolution ; a master-mind was needed to bring it about. Soon one appeared on the scene.

As stated earlier, the propounders of new ideas were mostly kshatriyas (the warrior class) who because of the political power they wielded and the wealth they were able to amass, could fittingly become rivals of the entrenched Brahmins and play the role of the vanguard of the revolution. "The kshatriyas in those far off times seem to have revolted from the priestly dominance"; observes Douglas Hill, "and in kshatriya circles there grew up a body of speculative thought and mystical doctrine which later on the more spiritually-minded Brahmins themselves were eager to learn."[1]

In the post-Upanishadic period, kshatriyas supported by a rising class of traders, gathered strength and raised the banner of revolt against sacerdotal domination. Whether or not Kapila, Kanada and Charvaka were kshatriyas there is no doubt that the founders of the different heterodox philosophical schools referred to in the previous chapter were of non-Brahmin

origin and in certain cases of low birth such as slaves and outcastes. For the success of their mission they received munificent gifts and grants of money and land from both the ruling classes and the business communities.

Buddha and His Madhyama Pratipath

A kshatriya clan, the Sakyas, inhabited the Nepalese terrain, north of Ayodhya, and had their capital at Kapilvastu. In the sixth century B.C. the Sakya king was Suddhodana whose queen, Mayadevi, gave birth to a son, Siddhartha Gautama, at the village Lumbini in or about 563 B.C. The prince known to history as the Buddha (the Enlightened One) was to prove the man of destiny and bring about the revolution for which India was fully prepared.

Siddhartha spent many years, after deserting the royal palace, in acquiring knowledge from Brahmins and ascetics and in deep contemplation. He joined an order of paribrajakas, roamed about freely, and frequently exchanged views with the wanderers. Writing about these meetings and talks Rhys Davids records : "Digha-Nakha calls on the Buddha, the Buddha visits Sakuludayi ; Vekhanasa calls on the Buddha, Keniya does the same, and Puttaliputta calls on Samidhi. The residents also, both to testify respect and to listen to their talk, used to call on the wanderers when the latter stayed in or near a village—evidence both of the popularity of the wanderers, and the frequent interchange of opinion."[2]

Having fully matured his ideas and theories about life and the universe by vigorous thinking and deep contemplation under a banyan tree at Bodh-Gaya on the banks of the river Niranjana, Siddhartha Gautama attained *nirvana* (enlightenment) and was entitled to be called the Buddha. Then he proceeded to Sarnath near Varanasi where he preached his first famous sermon recorded in the Buddhist text in these words :

> This, O monks, is the sacred truth of suffering : birth is suffering, old age is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, to be united with unloved is suffering, to be separated from the loved is suffering ; not to obtain what

> one desires is suffering ; in short the five-fold clinging (to the earthly) is suffering,
> This, O monks, is the sacred truth of the origin of suffering, it is the thirst (of being), which leads from birth to birth, together with lust and desire, which finds gratification here and there : the thirst for power.
> This, O monks, is the sacred truth of the extinction of suffering ; the extinction of this thirst by complete annihilation of desire, letting it go, expelling it, separating oneself from it, giving it no room.
> This, O monks, is the sacred truth of the path which leads to the extinction of suffering. It is this sacred eightfold path, to wit : Right Faith, Right Resolve, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Living, Right Effort, Right Thought, Right Self-concentration.
> This is the sacred truth of suffering. Thus my eye, O monks, was opened to these conceptions which no one had comprehended before, and my judgement, cognition, intuition, and vision were opened.
> It is necessary to understand this sacred truth of suffering. I have comprehended this sacred truth of suffering.[3]

For the rest of his life after attaining enlightenment, Buddha travelled like a paribrajaka and preached his doctrines throughout Kosala and Magadha (modern Bihar) till he died at Kusinagara (now Kasira in Deoria district) at the venerable age of 80, in or about 483 B.C.

The Buddha's sayings were preserved after his death in three books known as *Tripitaka* (three baskets) ; first consisting of *Vinaya* (rules of discipline for monks and nuns), second, *Sutta* (sayings of the Master) and third, *Abhidhamma* (philosophical discussions). It was decided that in case of doubt about anything in the Buddhist doctrines a council of competent monks should be summoned to resolve it. The first such council was held soon after the Master's death.

Besides being a revolutionary thinker, Gautama Buddha was an able organiser. Having made his views known, he proceeded to establish a *sangha* (an order) of *bhikshus* (monks) who would carry the message far and wide to bring about the needed mental change in the country.

It is recorded that besides the kshatriyas, hundreds of merchants flocked to the Sangha and fully cooperated with it in the task of spreading the revolution. According to Chinese

traveller, Hieun Tsang (630-644 A.C.), the famous university at the great Nalanda monastery was founded with the munificence of five hundred merchants who were disciples of Buddha.

Buddha as can be seen from his first sermon, laid down four noble truths : 1. There is suffering in the world. 2. The suffering has a cause. 3. The cause must be removed and 4. The eight-fold path must be followed to remove the suffering and attain nirvana.

The essence of Buddhism lies in the eight-fold path. These are the stages in the path of freedom. To start with, one must have proper vision to see that the sorrow in the world is caused by uncontrolled desire, greed, selfishness and cupidity of man. Peace cannot be achieved until the desire is reasonably quenched. This can be done by following eight-fold path. The second step is to have rational aims ; not to increase one's power and wealth at the expense of others, not to get lost in enjoyment of pleasures of senses and luxury ; while making one-self happy one should feel interested in increasing the happiness of others and to love all human beings in full measure. The third step is to control one's speech and never to indulge in useless gossip or utter lies, calumny or abuse, because misuse of tongue is harmful both for one's spiritual development and for the good of the society ; uncontrolled speech can lead to quarrels and violence and murder. Therefore, speech must be measured, truthful, conducive to mutual friendship and pleasing. The fourth step is right action. It is essential to be non-violent and abstain from killing, theft, adultery, fornication and such other deeds as would lead to disruption of society. Positively, one must perform actions which would benefit other people and help them to rise physically and intellectually. The fifth step is right living by which is meant that only pure and honest methods should be adopted to live and nothing done to harm other people in their onward march. The sixth step is to entertain only good thoughts in the mind ; evil thoughts should be removed and noble thoughts inducted and acted upon. This will be the correct mental exercise and discipline. The seventh is to be aware of the fact that the body is made of unclean substance and therefore one should be alert and conscious of the sensations

of pleasure and pain in the body. By constantly examining the sensations one should think upon the ways of removal of the evils that are produced by attachments of mind and bonds of flesh. The last and the eighth step is the right meditation. It is the carefully worked out mental training in concentration on problems of life that arise from time to time.[4]

The philosophy of the four truths and the eight-fold path contained mostly the values which had been propounded in one way or another by the rationalist thinkers in India who had preceded Buddha. It was the outcome of discussions and debates carried on for many generations. The Buddhist philosophy accepted both the materialistic-atomic theory of the Vaisheshaka system and the rationalistic-mechanistic conception of the universe as adopted by the Samkhya school. Buddha disputed the authority of the Brahminical scriptures and vigorously denounced sacrificial rites and rituals of the Vedic religion. He denied even the existence of an impersonal First Cause (the Brahman of the Vedanta) and refused to expatiate on the existence of soul. He declared that his mission is not one of religious conversions or of making metaphysical speculations, but one of objective enquiries into the causes and alleviation of human suffering on practical, psychological level.

The sixth century B.C. witnessed social dissolution in India after the Vedic tribal society had succumbed and there was much suffering all around. The old order had yielded, but a new one had yet to arise on its ashes. While many thinkers of the age felt terrified by the prevailing misery and shrank into their shells, Buddha manfully accepted the challenge to solve the gigantic problem confronting the society.

Maskarin Goshala tried to understand the causes of social dissolution but failing in that endeavour considered it safe to take shelter under fatalism. "Every thing appeared to him to have been determined by the most stupenduous, the most colossal, the unseen and fathomless force of we-know-not-what. It was the force of fate or destiny."[5] Buddha without attempting to fathom the fathomless devoted himself to build up a set of doctrines which suited the emerging social order and thus helped to accelerate the process of change.

Observing the transitoriness of all things, their coming into existence and final extinction, Buddha formulated a philosophy of change. He established that there is nothing permanent in this universe and all life is no more than a stream of becoming, a recurring phenomenon of birth and death. For him, therefore, change and flux are the basis of reality. Frequently pointing to the fire, he says that the flame appears to be unchanged yet every moment it is different and not the same.

Buddha held that an individual was composed of constantly changing *skandas* (physical and mental conditions) which were five in number. 1. *rupa* (shape) 2. *vedana* (feeling) 3. *sanjna* (perception) 4. *samskara* (predisposition generated by past experience) and *vijna* (consciousness). Since skandas are ever-changing the individual cannot but be ephemeral. As long as skandas are held together the individual functions as a single being and has a history. At death the union is dissolved and the skandas disperse. Thus permanency of self and the world is an illusion. Curiously, Buddha believed in the theory of karma, in rebirth and transmigration of soul which belief is incompatible with this theory. He, however, explained it by saying that experience of regrouping of skandas, hardens into a sort of rigidity, passes over and becomes a new existence in another womb. The *samsarchakra* (The wheel of rebirth) is represented as having twelve spokes *(dvadash nidhana)* signifying twelve fetters or links. This idea is brought out in the theory of *pratitya samutpada* in which Buddha states that with cessation of ignorance action ceases, and then one after the other consciousness of all things also ceases. Thus the will to live is the cause of our existence and its negation is nirvana. "Philosophically speaking", says Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, "this conception of every thing having its being in an eternal flux was by far the most significant contribution of early Buddhism and it is not a little surprising to note that precisely the same view, along with the same illustration of the fire was proclaimed a couple of generations later by Heraclites in ancient Greece, and further, is being restated, though of course with an incomparably richer content by modern science."[6]

The Buddhists did not make any attempt to reduce everything to non-existence as had been done by the nihilists

from whose philosophy they took over several points. They only visualised everything in an endless process of constant flux. Their doctrine controverted the basic assumption of the Vedanta system that jivatman exists and is identical with Parmatman. For a solution of the riddle of life, Buddha declared that belief in Supreme Being or Parmatman was useless. His conception of individual consciousness does not carry with it any implication that ego exists or is in any way a reality. The indirect rejection of the doctrine of soul inevitably leads to the denial of the existence of God, because He cannot be reached except through soul.

No school of Buddhist philosophy admits the existence of any supernatural or metaphysical existence. Basing their own conception of the universe on the atomist theory of Vaisheshaka, the Buddhists divided life into two parts: external (material) and internal (mental). Mind and things mental are conditional upon the existence of an atomic aggregate that is a peculiar combination of elements ; therefore the internal grows out of the external. The functioning of the atomic aggregate is a mechanical process which gives rise to the conscious, intelligent part of the existence.

Buddha repeatedly advised his hearers to doubt, inquire and be honestly convinced before adopting the ideas preached by him. "One must not accept my *dharma*", he declared, "from reverence, but first try it as gold is tried by fire." He discouraged blind faith. He never contested the prerogative of reason to be the ultimate criterion of truth. When Kalama princess complained that Brahmin preachers were creating doubt in their minds about the truth of his doctrines, he said : "It is the nature of things that doubt should arise. Do not believe in traditions merely because they have been handed down for many generations and in many places ; do not believe in anything because it is rumoured and spoken of by many, do not believe because the written statement of some old sage is produced ; do not believe in what you have fancied, thinking because it is extraordinary, it must have been planted by a *deva* or a wonderful being. After observation and analysis, when it agrees with reason, and is conducive to the good and to the benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it."[7]

Buddha expressly declared it unworthy of a monk and dangerous for his doctrine to attempt to exert influence over a layman by means of magic rather than by means of reasoned teaching and persuasion. The Buddhist literature in which he is stated to have taken part in miracle-working and which boasts of his marvellous powers is a later addition by his unintelligent and uninformed followers.

Buddha was also a realist and to persuade the people to abandon old ways, he showed what is widely known as the Middle Path *(Madhyama Pratipath)*. This is the core of his teachings and he adumbrated it in his first discourse at Sarnath referred to above. It is called the *Dharmachakra Pravartana Sutra*. In it, he advised the monks to keep clear of the two extreme ways of life : one being that of ease and luxury and the other that of rigorous asceticism. The Middle Path allowed a monk to live a life of simplicity but moderate comfort with the bare requirements of food, clothing and residence, nevertheless with mind intent upon achieving the supreme goal.

Buddha believed that man was responsible for his own regeneration. Any reliance on authority was neither necessary nor efficacious. Effect must inevitably follow a cause and nothing can stop this process. "Each man suffers the consequences of his own acts and learns thereby, while helping his fellow men to the same deliverance ; nor will prayer to the Buddha or to any God prevent an effect from following its cause. Buddhist monks are teachers and examplers, and in no sense intermediaries between Reality and the individual. The utmost tolerance is practised towards all other religions and philosophies, for no man has the right to interfere in his neighbour's journey to the Goal."[8] There is no reference to divine grace in the teachings of Buddha. To the enquiry of his chief disciple, Ananda, as to how monks should function after the Master's death, Buddha replied ; "Be ye lamps unto yourselves ; be ye a refuge to yourselves ; betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp ; hold fast as a refuge to the truth ; look not for refuge to any one besides yourselves."

The barter system of rituals and burnt offerings to the deities, as prescribed by Brahminical scriptures, in return for

graces and material acquisitions such as good crops, was repugnant to Buddha. The only way to rid humanity of this evil, he asserted, was by destroying the Vedic gods.

Buddha was opposed to division of society into castes. His repeated saying that all the four castes are equally pure must have been rather embarrassing for the arrogant Brahmins. For him there were either *upasakas* (house holders) or *bhikshus* (monks) among the people. To both he preached to live a moral life. Says B. G. Tilak : "Buddha did not accept either the Shrauta religious sacrifices pertaining to the state of a house holder, which involved the slaughter of animals, nor the division of society into four castes."[9]

Buddha displayed uncommon capacity for organisation in founding the Sangha, an order of monks. True to his principles, he admitted every applicant into the Sangha without distinction of race, caste or sex as its member. "A scavenger, a dog-eater, member of the lowest castes, were highly respected monks, too, initiated by the Buddha himself. There was also a separate order of Buddhist nuns, with their own organisation. The two great kings of the day, no longer tribal chiefs but absolute monarchs, offered respectful patronage. The blacksmith Chunda served the aged Buddha a special dish of mushrooms[10] which later brought on a relapse of earlier attack of dysentry and led to the Teacher's final illness, but he, too, received as much attention in a special discourse on morality as the richest merchant or most noble princeling."[11]

As regards the regulations and the rules of life that a *bhikshu* was expected to follow strictly, Kosambi has given an interesting detail :

> There were regulations specially meant for the monks such as celibacy, which were not binding upon the lay follower (*upasaka*). The Buddhist monastic order was organised and conducted its meetings precisely on the lines of the tribal *sabha* (assembly). The total number of monks in the Buddhist Sangha could not have exceeded 500 during the Teacher's life-time, nor is there any credible record of their having all gatherd together at any one time till after his death. The rules of the order which form a special *vinaya* (discipline) section of the Buddhist canon are all ascribed

> the Buddha himself in order to lend them his authority; but they are obviously of the later origin for the most part though formulated not long after his death. During his lifetime, and even long afterwards, any group of six or more almsmen could, if so minded, frame their own special rules and follow their own special discipline without interference by the rest of the order, provided, of course, they respected the main doctrine. The monk was permitted no property beyond a begging-bowl, a water pot, at most three pieces of plain, unembroidered, patternless cloth (preferably pieced together from rags) for wear, oil jug, razor, needle and thread, and a staff. The more delicate were allowed plain sandals. Though he might beg his food in a village or town, the one daily meal or left-over scraps (mixed together to minimise any pleasure of taste) had to be eaten before noon. Nor could the almsman stay in a householder's dwelling even for a single night (later altered to permit three nights or less). His residence has to be outside the settlement, in a grove, cave (originally natural cave), under a tree or in an enclosure into which dead bodies were thrown to be eaten by birds and animals, or sometimes cremated. These were just the places where the most gruesome primitive rites were practised, including cannibalism for the attainment of magic powers. The monk was enjoined not to let the terrifying sights move him, but to overcome all such perils by his own determination. For the three or four months of the rains, the residence had to be in some one place; otherwise he must travel on foot (never by chariot, elephant, horse, cart or pack animal) to preach to the people. Early monks, like the Buddha himself, were expert food gatherers, as is evident from their recorded argument about begging soiled food from other human beings; long trips through the wilderness did not trouble them. Generally, they would accompany caravans, but even then pass the night outside the camp. The Buddhist monk was forbidden labour for profit or for agriculture, having to live on alms or by gathering food in the forest without the taking of life; only thus he would be free to concentrate upon his social duties, the obligation to lead all to the proper way.[12]

It will be clear that the Buddha had drawn the regulations for bhikshus in accordance with the pattern of life which had been evolved by the paribrajakas for themselves. Buddhist

Sangha was another form of the paribrajaka order : only it was organised in a more disciplined manner.

Mahavira and His Syadavad

No less profound a paribrajika thinker than Buddha was Vardhamana who founded Jainism. He was a son of the kshatriya chief of Vaishali (modern Basarh in the Muzaffarpur district of Bihar) who came from the Lichhavi clan and headed a republican form of government.

When Vardhamana attained enlightenment, he came to be called by his followers as Mahavira (Great Hero) or *Jina* (the Conqueror). He is also known as *tirthankara* (ford-maker across the stream of existence). The Jainas (as his followers are called) believe that there were twenty-four *tirthankaras* before Mahavira who laid the foundations of their faith. But it is doubtful whether they were historical personages or mere legendary figures. There is some evidence that the twenty-third *tirthankara*, Parshavanatha by name, lived in the eighth century B.C. He was a kshatriya by birth and taught four principles of good life : Truthfulness, non-injury to life, giving up all property and non-stealing.

But the real founder of Jainism was Vardhamana who was born about the year 598 B.C. and left his family at the age of thirty to become a paribrajaka and like Maskarin Goshala roamed naked from village to village preaching his doctrines. In the beginning, his followers were called *nirgranthas* (unfettered) and mostly came from either the kshatriyas or the trading classes (*vaishyas*). After preaching his philosophy for nearly thirty years Mahavira died (attained *kaivalya*) at Pawa near Rajgriha in 526 B.C. at the age of 72.

Philosophically, both Buddhism and Jainism grew from the same basic notion that the world is full of misery and the aim of life should be to find means of deliverance from the endless cycle of births and deaths. Neither rejects the theory of *karma* and both believe it to be the root-cause of *samsara* (cycle of births). Both advocate practice of austerities in varying degrees of severity and attainment of knowledge as the chief means of salvation. "Originally, Jaina saints went

about 'clothed in space' (*digambara*), i.e. stark naked, as a sign that they did not belong to any recognised group or sect, trade or community," says Zimmer. "They had discarded all determining marks ; for determination is negation by specialization. In the same spirit, the wandering Buddhist monks were instructed to go clad in rags, or else in an ochre-coloured garment—the latter being traditionally the garb of the criminal ejected from society and condemned to death. The monks donned this disgraceful raiment as a sign that they too were dead to the social hierarchy. They had been handed over to death and were beyond the boundaries of life. They had stepped away from the world's limitations, out of all the bondages of belonging to something. They were renegades."[13] Both Buddhism and Jainism hold that complete emancipation from rebirth is attainable only by the homeless ascetic though they regard the life of layman as an initial and a preparatory stage in the process. Though their codes differ in certain respects both prescribed disciplinary regulations for monks and laymen. Both discarded Sanskrit and gave their sermons in *Pali* or *Prakrit*, the language spoken by the masses.

These resemblances are so close that at one time scholars thought that Buddha and Mahavira were one and the same person with two names or that Jainism was no more than a branch of Buddhism. This was a mistaken conclusion as fundamental differences were found to exist between the two philosophies. Buddhist advocate the Middle Path or the golden mean and are opposed to the extreme forms of penances and austerities on which the Jainas insist,

Buddhists do not totally abstain from taking life as do the Jainas. The conception of the soul is considerably different in the two orders. Buddhist monks were disallowed to move about naked as the Jaina monks did. The similarities between the two orders arose because they were born in the same area with pre-Aryan cultural background and during the same time, and, therefore, it is no wonder that both drew upon the prevalent views and prejudices to evolve their respective tenets. Winternitz says: "The religion of the Jainas, Jainism, has so much in common with Buddhism that, for a long

time, it was considered merely as a Buddhist sect. Nevertheless, it presents a marked divergence from the Buddhist religion in such essential points, that it must be regarded as an independent creed. Jainism lays far more stress than Buddhism on asceticism and all manner of cult exercises, and in contrast to the Buddha, Mahavira taught a very elaborate belief in the soul... An essential difference between the two religions is, however, that Jainism has always remained a national Indian religion, whilst Buddhism developed into a world religion. The Jainas have retained the Indian system of castes and classes in its entirety, and Jainism has a much stronger tendency than Buddhism to adapt itself to Brahminism and Hinduism, and also it is confind within the frontiers of India."[14]

The Jainas believe that the entire universe of things can be traced to two everlasting components, namely, the *jiva* (the conscious) and the *ajiva* (the non-conscious). The life monads (*jiva*) are infinite in number, uncreated, omniscient and identically alike. Differences between them occur through their accidental contact with matter. The classification of things into jiva and ajiva, it may be noted, is an objective one and does not correspond to the self and the non-self of Brahminism. The jivas become tainted through the perpetual influx of the ajiva.

In the view of the Jainas, the universe has always been there and will never end ; the entire cosmos is in a human form and we are all particles of this gigantic body and for every one of us the task is to avoid such karma as would degrade the jiva. The endeavour should be to ascend as speedily as possible to supreme bliss.

The Jainas divide the karma into eight categories : 1. *jnana avaran* which obscures true knowledge, 2. *darshana avaran* which interferes with perception of the processes of universe, 3. *vendaniya* which obscures blissful nature, 4. *mohaniya* which disturbs the right attitude, 5. *ayus* which determines length of life, 6. *nama* which establishes special qualities of the individual, 7. *gotra* which determines the family and social status, and 8. *antarvya* which prevents doing good.

According to Jaina doctrines every karma binds the *jiva*; even a holy karma keeps the jiva bound to the world. Therefore, this inflow should be arrested by total abstention from action. When the union of jiva and ajiva takes place bondage is the result. Salvation is the dissolution of this combination. The Jainas asserted that jiva is totally different from matter by which it is bound and withheld from attaining liberation.

There is no room for devotion to a deity in Jainism. Mahavira forbade any attachment to gods. There is no such entity distinct from the cosmos called God. But it is recognised that there is a whole galaxy of deified men (called tirthankaras) who had been spiritually great. Every soul possessed the potentiality of becoming as great as any one of the tirthankaras ; when the jiva attains perfection after freeing itself from the ajiva, it becomes supreme.

Unless and until the jiva gets itself released from the ajiva, it is bound to revolve through the various stages where it has to experience meaningless pleasures and excruciating pains. The release can be attained through lengthy ordeal of austerities and self-abnegation. These have been categorised into three jewels : 1. Right faith which has been interpreted as belief in real existence, 2. Right knowledge which means knowledge of real nature without any doubt or error and 3. Right conduct, an attitude of disinterest without desire or aversion towards the objects of the external world. Right conduct according to Mahavira consists in 1. *ahimsa* (non-violence) 2. *satya* (truthfulness) 3. *aparigraha* (non-stealing), 4. *brahmacharya* (celibacy and chastity in thought, word and deed) and 5. *anasakti* (non-attachment to all worldly interests).

To the Jainas sin is not an offence against God but only against man. It is remarkable that the Jainas recommended death by starvation as a means of liberation ; for suicide is a virtue which increaseth life. "The essential difference between the monastic rules of the Jainas and the Buddhists is that those of the Jainas lay much more stress on severe asceticism and even go as far as to recommend religious suicide. If a monk suffers from cold, he should rather freeze to death than break his vow. However ill and weak he may be, he should rather die than break his vow of fasting. He is to go

naked, so as to expose himself to the pricking of blades of grass, to the inclemency of the weather and the bites of the flies and mosquitoes."[15] Dr. Zimmer calls Jainism "a philosophy of the profoundest pessimism".

The Jainas, no doubt, believed in the existence of soul but they conceived it as a constantly changing entity something very different from the orthodox Brahmin conception of "simple and immortal" divine spark in man. The Jainas asserted that soul was composed of an infinite number of particles, soul-atoms, which were constantly increasing and decreasing. In their view this process did not affect the permanence of the soul for, they held, a thing can be permanent or impermanent at the same time. For example, though the water in a stream is constantly flowing the stream of water is always the same. Thus the phenomenal world is real and permanent with all its continual changes and transitions.[16]

A notable contribution made by Jainas to Indian philosophy is the celebrated doctrine of *syadvada* (conditional predication). It is also called the theory of maybe. According to it, Reality can be seen from seven possible stand-points: 1. *asti* (it exists), 2. *nasti* (it does not exist), 3. *asti -nasti* (it exists as well as it exists not) 4. *avaktavyam* (it is indescribable) 5. *asti cha avktavyam cha* (it exists and is indescribable)., 6. *nasti cha avaktavyam cha* (it does not exist and it is indescribable) and 7. *asti cha nasti cha avaktavyam cha* (it exists and exists not and is indescribable). Every proposition is accompanied by the word *syad* (perhaps). It is held by this theory that no proposition is absolutely true or absolutely false. Hence it has come to be known as *syadvada*.

The Jainas pointed to the ancient story of six blind men who wanting to know what an elephant is like, put their hands on its different parts and each, describing his own finding, said that the elephant was exactly like a fan (touching the ear), like a wall (touching the side), like a snake (touching the trunk), like a rope (touching the tail) and so on. The experience of the six blind men depicts the logical fallacy inherent in human thought. Man sees a partial view of Reality and arrives at a wrong conclusion. The Jainas therefore asserted that nothing is certain in this world on account of

endless complexity of things. The Reality, whatever it may be, expresses itself in multiple form with the result that no absolute predication is possible. This thought-process gave birth to another theory of *anekantvada* (many-sidedness of Reality). "Nevertheless, Jainism, too, represents a scientific, practically atheistic, interpretation of existence", says Zimmer, "for the gods are nothing but life-monads, wearing temporarily favourable masks in supremely fortunate surroundings, whereas the material universe is uncreated and everlasing."[17]

The Jaina logic was unsettling for the rigid system of the orthodox Brahmins who set up imaginary fixed standards. Jainas disputed the absoluteness of the standard of truth and pulled down the entire airy structure of the doctrines and dogmas reared by the Brahmins. The Jaina argument was a vigorous protest against the dogmatism of the Vedas and not aimed at denying all Reality; it was not metaphysical nihilism as some scholars have suggested. Jainas had a theory of Reality. The world, according to them, was not altogether unknowable, only one should not be cocksure about one's assertions. They said: "There is no God or creator, and man's emancipation from suffering does not depend upon the mercy of any such being. Man is the architect of his own destiny. By living an austere life of purity and virtue, he can escape the ills of life. The best life is the life of renunciation ; it is the shortest way to salvation."

The First Social Revolution

Because the minds of the Indian people had already been prepared by many intellectual stalwarts and numberless paribrajakas, for reception of the rationalist-materialist views and also because the Vedic tribal society was in a state of dissolution, the heterodox doctrines of *Vedavirodakas* (opponents of Vedas) spread rapidly in the country.

The first to embrace the new faith of Buddhism were the people of Koshala and the adjoining areas. Significantly, the warrior and the trading classes took the lead; in certain cases entire clans were converted by the powerful influence of the Buddha. Decked in their best and in pomp and magnificence, the republican Lichchhavis welcomed the Buddha to their city.

When they heard him they accepted his teachings and sermons. Among them were 500 arrogant youth who were not expected to be polite towards any reformer. Mohanma, the grand old man of Lichchhavis, expressed utter surprise that "these arrogant youth who were rowdy in their daily life had become so mild and gentle before the Exalted One." A Lichchhavi prince, the despair of his parents, was transformed by a single discourse of the Master. The people therefore hailed Buddha as "the chief trainer, supreme in bowing men to the yoke of truth". A large number of men and women became *upaskas* (followers) and many took the robe; even the rich courtesan, Ambpalli, could not escape coming under Buddha's charm. When the new ideas spread over vaster areas, Brahmin institutions received a severe jolt and gigantic forces were unleashed to build an egalitarian society. "The Buddha's prohibition of 'the low arts of divination, spells, omens, astrology, sacrifices to gods, witchcraft and quackery' relieved the Indian masses of a burden which had become a grievous impediment to their spiritual progress."[18] India witnessed the first revolution in her long and chequered history.

7

Fruits of the Revolution

GAUTAMA the Buddha was fortunate to see, in his own lifetime, his doctrines being accepted and practised by thousands of people in Koshala and the adjacent areas. He was also able to establish an order of monks and nuns to guide his followers on the path of *Dhamma* (Sanskrit *Dharma*). The Master's influence did not cease to spread after his death. Within a couple of centuries the torch of the Buddhist Revolution had reached every nook and corner of the Indian subcontinent, bringing both Aryans and non-Aryans under its sway. "If the foundations of the Mauryan dynasty by Chandragupta (325-300 B.C.) was the culminating point of Aryan political supremacy in India", says E. B. Havell, "the accession of his grandson, Ashoka, about 268 B.C., and his subsequent proclamations of the Dharma of the Enlightened One as the law of the land, must be taken to mark the final breaking down of the racial barriers between Aryans and non-Aryan, and the beginning of the history of India as distinguished from that of Aryavarta."[1]

The Buddhist Revolution wrought all-pervading changes in the social life of the Indian people. With its this-wordly attitude and rationalistic view of the universe, new values of life were evolved and the institutions set up by the Brahmins were gradually replaced by the ones suited to the Buddhist doctrines.

With the decay and dissolution of the tribal society, republican forms of government were brought into existence in which the view of the majority prevailed even in the time of grave crisis. Where the kingship survived, it had to adapt itself to the changed conditions. At the time of coronation the king had to take the oath of service to the people. "May I be deprived of heaven, of life, and the offspring if I oppress you", he used to declare at the time of assuming rulership. Bad kings were deposed by vote of the people. "The Sakya Parliament", writes Prof. R. K. Mookerjee, "had to decide by the vote of the majority the very vital question whether they should open the gates of their city and offer surrender to the invader, the Koshala King, revengeful Virudaka. This shows how this essential characteristic of democracy marked the working of both political and religious organisations and was not confined to either."[2] Buddha encouraged the democratic spirit and, in fact, had the Samgha built on this basis. In supporting the republican Lichchhavis against Ajat Shatru who wanted to subdue them, Buddha laid down two points for good administration : first to hold full and frequent public assemblies and, second to meet together in concord and rise in concord and carry out all undertakings in concord. The Buddhist texts and other literature of the period furnish proof that the democratic spirit of taking decisions in public gatherings after frank and full discussion pervaded the society as long as Buddhism was preponderant in India. With the decline of caste system every adult without distinction of birth or sex, was involved in the process of debates and decision-making.

During the early Buddhist period there were a number of republican states such as Sakyas of Kapilavastu and the Vajjian confederation of which the Lichchhavis of Vaishali formed part as the most prominent member. The republics were ruled by assemblies consisting of both young and old elected members, which frequently met and discussed all important questions concerning the affairs of the state. There used to be a head of state elected for a term of years who also functioned as the chief executive officer. However, the theory of divine origin of rule prevailed. It was amended by the view

that the rule was a social contract between the ruler and ruled. But the notion that the king was irremovable master had been given up. He was no longer a hereditary *naresh* (lord of the people). Aryadeva, a Buddhist monk, making observations on contemporary statecraft, asked : "What is thy pride worth, O king, who art a mere servant of the *gana* (multitude or body politic) and receiveth sixth part (of the grains) as thy wages ?"

With the divisive tendencies inherent in the theory of caste, Brahminism had impeded the process of unification of the people set in by the concept of One God of the Upanishads. The climate generated now by the Buddhist Revolution opened the possibilities of uniting the people and bringing the country under one rule. "The laxity of social restrictions", says R. K. Mookerji, "imposed by the orthodox Brahminical culture and the universal aspect of Buddhism and Jainism which found a congenial home in Magadha must have considerably widened the political outlook of this region and contributed to make it the nucleus of a mighty empire."[3] At the time of Buddha's death there were four big states each under a powerful and ambitious ruler : 1. Avanti (Malwa), 2. Koshala (Oudh), 3. Vatsa (near Allahabad) and 4. Magadha (South Bihar) with their capitals respectively at Ujjayini, Sravasti, Kausambi and Rajgriha. But in the next two centuries when Buddhism had spread throughout Northern India big empires began to be founded. Sishunaga (c 411 to 393 B.C.), Chief of Kashi, annexed Avanti and enhanced his power. One of his successors, Mahapadma Nanda described as a man of low caste (shudra) conquered the whole of Northern India except the Punjab and Kashmir and became a mighty emperor.

In the opinion of Radha Kumud Mookerji, known as an authority on Hindu civilization, the history of Buddhism and Jainism shows that rapid changes in orthodox ideas were as true in religion as in politics. "Perhaps both were inspired by a common spirit of revolt against the conservative hierarchy which had hitherto dominated Church and State. An unorthodox spirit in religion, which was already launched on its triumphal career was ably seconded by an equally hetero-

dox view of politics. In any case sixth and fifth centuries B.C. hold out strange phenomena before us, Kshatriya chiefs founding popular religious sects which menaced the Vedic religion, and shudra leaders establishing a big empire in Aryavarta on the ruins of kshatriya kingdom. These two events might not have been altogether isolated or unconnected."[4]

The Nandas were destroyed by Chandragupta Mauraya who seized the throne in 325 B.C. Besides northern India, he annexed the western provinces of Sind, Kathiavad, Gujarat and Malwa to his empire. Seleucus Nikator, ruler of Syria, attacked India in 305 B.C. but was defeated and had to accept a humiliating treaty by which he ceded Afghanistan and Baluchistan to Chandragupta and gave his daughter to the conqueror in marriage. Chandragupta was succeeded by his son Bindusara in 300 B.C. who ruled until his death in 274 B.C. when his son, Ashoka, ascended the throne.

Chandragupta is said to have embraced Jainism and Bindusara was an Ajivaka both of which, as we know, were heterodox creeds and antagonistic to Brahminical dogmas and tenets. Eight years after Ashoka came to power, he launched upon a military expedition to conquer the neighbouring state of Kalinga (modern Orissa). He succeeded but not before rivers of blood had flown and millions of innocent men were either killed or made destitute. In Ashoka's own words "a hundred and fifty thousand people were deported, a hundred thousand were killed and many times that number perished."[5] The indescribable misery which followed the war made Ashoka remorseful and he embraced Buddhism. "Afterwards, now that Kalinga was annexed, the Beloved of the Gods (Ashoka) very earnestly practised Dhamma, desired Dhamma and taught Dhamma."[6] Never again in his lifetime did the emperor attempt to annex any territory by armed force. Following strictly the humanist philosophy of Buddha Ashoka built his domestic and foreign policies on the principles of social justice and brought peace and prosperity to India it had never enjoyed before. For the first time in Indian history the subcontinent was united and an empire established from Afghanistan in the North, to Mysore in the South,

from Gujarat in the West, to the boundaries of Bengal in the East.

Fortunately, we possess abundant information about Ashoka's rule for he had chosen an ingenious method of conveying his messages to the people. He set up seven pillars in different parts of the country on which he engraved inscriptions. He also got surfaces of fourteen rocks smoothened for the same purpose. These are known as the Pillar Edicts and Rock Edicts and give comprehensive information about the principles and policies which governed the Emperor's administration. All of the edicts are in Pali, excepting the one at Kandhar which is bilingual, in Greek and Aramaic.

Some historians have stated that Ashoka declared Buddhism as the state religion and caused conversion of people to it. Far from being a proselytiser, he respected all creeds and opposed none. He had grasped the essence of rationalist culture and imbibed the spirit of the Buddhist Revolution. He was least interested in the spread of formal religion. What he aimed at was the acceptance of human values which he called Dhamma (Sanskrit *Dharma*) by the people living not only within his empire but beyond its borders. He earnestly and untiringly devoted his entire energy to the achievement of this objective.

Ashoka's conception of Dhamma was simple yet sublime. "What is Dhamma ?" he asked and then answered himself: "It is having few faults and many good deeds—mercy, charity, truthfulness and purity."[7] "There is no practice of Dhamma without goodness", he declared.[8]

Again : "There is no gift comparable to the gift of Dhamma, the praise of Dhamma, the sharing of Dhamma, fellowship of Dhamma. And this is good behaviour towards slaves and servants, obedience to mother and father, generosity towards friends, acquaintances and relatives and towards *Sramanas* and *Brahmans*, and abstention from killing living beings."[9]

Ashoka prohibited killing of animals, particularly with the intention of sacrificing them for holding of harmful (Brahmin) festivals.[10] He provided medical facilities for men and beasts and got medicinal herbs planted all over the empire and even

in lands not ruled by him.[11] He instructed *yuktas* (subordinate officials), *rejukas* (rural administrators) and *pradeshikas* (district heads) to go on tour every five years to meet people and know their problems and solve them.[12] He himself not only toured widely but was always available to the humblest at any time, for public hearing. His orders were to keep him informed of all important developments.[13] He asked his officers to get interested in welfare of prisoners and get such of them released as have children or are afflicted or aged.[14] During his rule of 26 years he ordered the release of prisoners 25 times.[15]

Ashoka believed that men have no doubt varying desires and passions "But even a generous man who has no self-control, purity of mind, gratitude and firm faith is regarded as mean."[16] Himself a Buddhist, the Emperor honoured all sects. He appreciated love for one's faith but remarked : "This is good, but better is to control one's speech so as not to extol one's own sect or disparage another's on unsuitable occasions or at least to do so mildly on certain occasions." He stressed : "Be well-informed and learn the fundamentals of all sects ; that is Dhamma."[17]

Ashoka thought that people generally saw their own virtues and not vices. It was difficult to be conscious of this failing. Nevertheless, he advised to take note of this and to understand that "cruelty, harshness, anger, pride and envy are productions of sin and let them not be the cause of my fall."[18]

Dhamma was the be-all and end-all for Ashoka but he never thought of using force or compulsion in making people follow it. That would have been incompatible with the basic principle on which his State policy was built. He said : "The advancement and Dhamma amongst men has been achieved through two means—legislation and persuasion. But of these two legislation has been less effective and persuasion more so. I have proclaimed through legislation for instance that certain species of animals are not to be killed, and other such ideas. But men have increased their adherence to Dhamma by being persuaded not to injure living beings and not to take life."[19]

Addressing officers and city magistrates, Ashoka told them : "You are in charge of many thousands of living beings. You should gain the affection of men. All men are my children, and just as I desire for my children that they should obtain welfare and happiness both in this world and the next, the same do I desire for all men."[20]

In brief, this was Ashoka's concept of Dhamma. He said that he wanted fame and glory to the extent that people may follow Dhamma.[21] He was so attached to his ideal as to declare: "No happiness without Dhamma...the principle is : to protect through Dhamma, to administer affairs according to Dhamma, to please the people with Dhamma, to guard the empire with Dhamma."[22]

Ashoka did not try to convert his subjects to Buddhism but he did encourage and reward those people, both men and women, who followed Dhamma. "The *rajukas* (rural officers) are appointed over many hundred of thousands of people. I have instructed them duly to encourage those people devoted to Dhamma. With the same idea in mind I have made pillars of Dhamma, appointed officers of Dhamma and made proclamations of Dhamma."[23]

Ashoka was powerful enough to extend his empire and bring the neighbouring lands under his subjugation. But he desisted from doing so as he considered this worthless and futile. He did not even try to conquer the extreme south of the Indian subcontinent which remained outside his empire and consisted of Cholas, Pandyas and Kerala Putras. He left the frontier people in a semi-autonomous state and was reluctant to subdue them. He believed his mission was fulfilled if the people living in the frontier areas and beyond the confines of his empire understood Dhamma and followed it. His burning desire was "that humble and great should make progress and that the neighbouring people should know that the progress is lasting."[24] He built hospitals for men and beasts and got medicinal herbs planted in the countries of Cholas, Pandyas Satyaputras, Kerala Putras and even in Ceylon and in Greek lands of Antiochus with the purpose of spreading Dhamma.[26]

The edicts of the Emperor were to be read in public gatherings all over the empire at intervals of four months. But if

even a single person at any time and at any place wanted to hear any of the Emperor's edict the orders were that it should be read to him.[26]

Ashoka was convinced that his policy of Dhamma had fully succeeded in both domestic and foreign spheres and that it had brought peace and prosperity to the world known to him. In this he was not far from being right. He observed : "In the past kings sought to make the people progress but they did not. I have made them hear proclamations of Dhamma and instructed them with the knowledge of Dhamma. When they have heard this, they will endorse it and will be elevated and will greatly progress in Dhamma."[27] Later on he declared : "Love of Dhamma has grown through my efforts and that of my officers."[28] The Thirteenth Rock Edict records: "The Beloved of the Gods considers Dhamma to be the foremost victory. And moreover the Beloved of the Gods has gained this victory on all his frontiers to a distance of 600 yojanas (about 1500 miles), where reigns the Greek king Antiochus, and beyond the realm of that Antiochus, in the lands of the four kings—Ptolemy, Antigonus, Magas and Alexander; and in the south over the Cholas and Pandyas as far as Ceylon. Likewise here in the imperial territories among the Greeks and the Kambojas, Nabhakas, Nabhapanktis Bhojas and Pitinikas, Andhras and Parindar, everywhere the people follow the Beloved of the Gods' instructions in Dhamma. Even where the envoys of the Beloved of the Gods have not gone, people hear of his conduct according to Dhamma, his precepts and his instructions in Dhamma and they follow Dhamma and will continue to follow it."[29] Ashoka believed that "the gods, who in India upto this time did not associate with men, now mingle with them, and this is the result of my efforts."

There is no doubt that Ashoka's success was great and his desire was noble when he declared that "these inscriptions of Dhamma have been engraved so that any sons or great grandsons that I may have should not think of gaining new conquests." He advised his descendants "to realize that conquest by Dhamma to be a true conquest, and (therefore) delight in Dhamma should be their whole delight for this is of value in both this world and the next."[30] But Ashoka was

overconfident and only romantic when he thought that the practice of Dhamma which he had fostered would last for ever.

Scholars have been, despite the description in the edicts, at pains to find out the precise connotation and significance of Dhamma. Rhys Davids remarks that "it never means exactly religion, but rather when used in that connection, what it behoves a man of right feeling to do or on the other hand what a man of sense will naturally hold. It lies quite apart from all questions either of ritual or of theology."[31] Romila Thapar explains: "It (Dhamma) was the building of an attitude of mind in which social behaviour, the behaviour of one person towards another, was considered of great importance. It was a plea for the recognition of the dignity of man and for humanistic spirit in the activities of society."[32] Dhamma, in brief, meant inculcation of a rational outlook on life. The key-note of Ashoka's teachings is moderation in thought and action. "That is all", adds Rhys Davids. "There is not a word about God or the soul (in the edicts), not a word about Buddha or Buddhism. The appeal is made, in apparent confidence, that the statements are self-evident to all the subjects of the empire."[33]

Ashoka's method was to seek consent by persuasion and by appeal to faculty of reason and sense of justice. "The Ashokan edicts clearly provide the first constitutional check against crown", says Kosambi, "the first Bill of Rights for the citizen. This is made clear by the special instruction to officials that the edicts were to be read out and carefully explained to large public gatherings at least three times a year."[34]

Those who know little about the high level of moral and intellectual culture which India had attained in the Buddhist period, and came in contact with the Indians after the seventh or eighth century A.C. when the country had plunged into darkness after the rise of neo-Brahminism (to be discussed in the following chapter), have generally inferred that Ashoka was much in advance of his time. This is not correct. As Rhys Davids points out : "Had there been then anything new or strange in this view of life (which now seems so strange to a European reader) there would have been phrases in the Edicts

striving to meet the natural objection that must certainly have arisen. There is nothing of the kind. It follows that the doctrine, as an ideal, must have been already widely accepted, though men did not always act up to it."[35] The same view has been expressed by Romila Thapar. "His (Ashoka's) greatest claim to recognition lies in the fact that he understood his age, and in terms of the Indian background, realised the requirements it demanded."[36] "Buddhism and Jainism were essentially democratic movements", writes Havell, "and Ashoka in putting himself at the head of the one and extending state patronage to the other made himself a great popular leader, while he disarmed the hostility of the Brahman priesthood by his tolerant attitude towards all religious sects."[37]

Ashoka died at an advanced age in 232 B.C. after having ruled with vigour and wisdom for forty one years. The fairest tribute paid to him is by H.G. Wells in his *Outline of History* : "Amdist the tens of thousands of names of monarchs that crowd the columns of history, their majesties and graciousnesses, and serenities and royal highnesses and the like, the name of Ashoka shines and shines almost alone, a star. From the Volga to Japan his name is still honoured. China, Tibet and even India, though it has left his doctrine, preserve the tradition of his greatness. More living men cherish his memory today than have ever heard the names of Constantine or Charlemagne."

The third council of the Buddhist Sangha was held under the presidentship of Tisa in Ashoka's reign and under his patronage. It decided to send missionaries for preaching of Dhamma to Gandhara, to the Himalayan states of Tibet and Nepal, to the borderlands of the Indus, to the coast of Burma, to South India and Ceylon. Each party consisted of a leader and four assistants.

While Ashokan Edicts convey a clear view of the ideological and administrative changes that were brought about by the Buddhist Revolution, other sources speak of the radical transformation that had taken place in the social, cultural and economic life of the people.

The caste system had been weakened, its rigidity was no longer there. The Brahmins had lost their prestige and authority. Many of them worked as cultivators, craftsmen, messengers, cattle breeders and story-tellers. *Dasa-Brahman-Jataka* says that they even served as wagon-drivers, policemen, *gopas* (milkmen) and *nishadas* (hunters) killing hares, catching fish, tortoises and the like as also digging the soil wearing long hairs and nails covered with dust and dirt. The kshatriyas became potters, basket makers, reed-workers and cooks.[38]

Reference has already been made to shudras becoming kings; they were elevated to the status of administrators, of politicians and teachers. Harsha Vardhan who built the last big empire in India, was, according to the Chinese pilgrim, Hieun-Tsang (630-645 A.D.), of vaishya caste by birth. In fact he has mentioned in his travelogue many kings of whom some were Brahmins other kshatriyas, vaishyas or shudras.

The condition of women improved and from being treated as inferior species under the sacerdotal supremacy they attained a social status in many respects equal to that of men. When Buddha at the request of his chief disciple, Ananda, allowed nuns to join his order it was of tremendous significance. Women were no longer regarded primarily as childbearers; they could freely participate in social and religious activities and they could, if they so liked, remain unmarried.

Education ceased to be the monopoly of the Brahmins or the selected few taught by them. It was no longer confined to the *gurukulas* (family of the preceptor) as in the Brahminical age. "In the Buddhist system education was imparted in the viharas or monasteries, giving scope to a collective life and spirit of brotherhood among the many resident monks, who came under a common discipline and instruction. The Buddhist *vihara* was built up as a self-sufficient colony, growing its own food by agriculture and dairy-farming, in its own grounds which came into its possession as gift from its supporters."[39]

While the language of the Brahmins was Sanskrit which had ceased to be the common language, the Buddhists addressed the congregations in Pali and wrote books on different subjects in this language which the masses spoke and easily understood.

"It is symptomatic of the attitude of the followers of Mahavira and Gautama that they should address the people in their own dialect and not hieratic Sanskrit. Thanks to the exertions of the heterodox sects, the *prakritas* (vernaculars) grew as literary languages and became powerful rivals to the Sanskrit."[40]

In pre-Buddhist days, *Atharva Veda* was the source of medical knowledge. It taught that diseases were caused by demons and, therefore, prescribed spells as cure. But unlike the followers of the idealistic systems of Indian philosophy who belittled the importance of the body and laid emphasis on the liberation of the soul, the rationalists and materialists with their concern for worldly advancement, conceived liberation in terms of development of physical science. Thus arose alchemy and medical science in India. During the period of the Buddhist Revolution the causes of illness were found out by study of body and its various organs. Experiments were made both in medicine and surgery and with many discoveries various theories were laid down some of which have stood the test of time.

The oldest treatise on the medicine is the *Samhita* by Charaka who, according to tradition, was the physician of the Buddhist Emperor Kanishka. Another famous book is of Sushruta which was translated into Persian and Arabic. A manuscript of it belonging to 4th century A.C. found at Kashgar in 1890 (Bower Manuscript), enumerates several writers on medicine as Atriya Ksherpani, Jatukarna, Parahara, Bheda and Herita who flourished in different periods though none of their works are extant. The lost books dealt with elixirs for prolonging life and recipes for external and internal application to fight different diseases.

Surgery was a part of the ancient medical science. Instruments had been invented for the purpose which were given functional names such as *dhola yantram*, *svedani yantram and patna yantram*. There is ample evidence that these instruments were widely used to perform operations. Says the author of *Rudrayamala Tantra :* "I have performed the aforementioned experiments with my own hands and have seen them with my own eyes. These are not recorded from mere hearsay or from the

dication of a teacher. These are being promulgated for the benefit to mankind."[41]

It is in the economic life of the Indian people that was see the radical changes brought about by the Buddhist Revolution. Even in earlier days toilers on the soil had started to produce food instead of gathering it. The Revolution accelerated the process. Vast forests were cut down or burned to have more land for growing grains. The enthusiasm for claring forests by fire became so uncontrollable that Buddha had to issue ordinances forbidding indiscriminate destruction. One of the Ashokan edicts also refers to it saying that "forests must not be burnt either uselessly or in order to destroy living beings." Big and small estates arose all over Northern India. From the time of Buddha we come across isolated large estates side by side with small farms. "No stigma was attached to labour", writes Atindra Nath Bose. "The Indian yeomanry put their hand to the plough along with their men as much as their less fortunate brethren. They were not attracted by the luxuries of the town to leave their prosperous farms to ruin under the care of indifferent agents. The smaller farmer as well was never squeezed out of existence under the remorseless pressure of a superior economic caste standing in haughty segregation... legally the big land owner and the small husbandman stood on equal footing."[42]

Dependence on agriculture, however, created new problems. To cultivate it, for raising crops, land needed water. In the beginning the monsoon provided sufficient water but then, as now, not infrequently the rains failed causing drought and helplessness. "With the clearance of forests, increase of population and rise of class divisions, famine became a major agrarian problem before the dawn of Christian Era," observes Bose. In the Brahminical age people would have resorted to making sacrifices to the gods, praying to the Supreme Power or to fasting. Not so after the Revolution. Now the people turned to mechanical devices to ward off such calamities as drought and flood. Bose remarks : "Passing on to the earliest Buddhist literature, a gradual change in outlook is marked, when states and people awaken to action. By careful diagnosis of the causes of famines and injury to crops, they began to explore

specifics and apply preventive and remedial measures instead of trusting overmuch on the humours of the gods."[43]

Drought can be fought and subdued by planned irrigation and not by holding *yajnas* to appease the wrathful denizens of the heaven. "In Buddha's time, the *khetas* (agricultural lands), of Magadha were intersected by a network of canals and ridges—rectangular and curvilinear—which marked the boundaries of arable plots and which resembled a patchwork robe (*chivar*) such as is prescribed by Buddha as a pattern for the order."[44] Irrigation schemes provided not only against drought but also against flood and excessive rainfall.[45]

As the population increased the demand for food became greater occasioning shortage of foodstuffs. Kautilya, the famous adviser of Chandragupta Mauriya, prescribes reclamation and colonization of waste land. The cultivators were warned to properly use the irrigation projects which were the outcome of mature engineering skill. He goes to the extent of saying that any offender who breaks the dam of a tank full of water shall be drowned in that very tank (*udakadharnam setum bhindate*).[46]

The Greek writers, like Diodorus and Megasthenes who stayed in India during this period describe it as a land of perennial plenty. They confess that the prosperity was the fruit of the admirable irrigation and river systems no less than of the timely monsoon and natural fertility of the soil. They affirm that there has never been a general scarcity of nourishing food, and famine is unknown. There were special officers who kept a watch on the rivers, measured land and inspected the sluices by which water was let out from the main canals into their branches so that everyone might have an equal supply of it. Megasthenes said the arrangement was similar to the one in Egypt.[47]

The *Mahavagga* enumerates among textile goods *khomam* (linen), *Kappasikam* (cotton), *koseyjam* (silk), *kamnalam* (woolen garments), *sanam* (hemp) and *bhangam* (hempen cloth).[48] Pannini mentions Kapsia as the vine growing district of India.[49]

Land revenue was one sixth of the produce and collected in kind. The king was enjoined by thinkers of all shades of

opinion to give surest guarantee against famine and consider it to be his duty in return for the revenue which the agricultural land brought in to his treasury. The other responsibilities of the king were colonisation, road-building. town-planning and reclamation of virgin land. These works were either undertaken directly by the state or private agencies were subsidized to do them.[50]

Next to agriculture in importance was animal husbandry. Both Buddhism and Jainism had popularised the ethical principle of *ahimsa* or non-injury to all forms of life. Despite the rapid progress in clearance of primeval forests, animals were meticulously protected and preserved. Slaughter of animal for flesh was allowed and in fact even Brahmins are known to have resorted to the profession of slaying oxen (*goghataka*) but this was done only in abettoir (*parisunam*). Cruel pastimes among herdsmen such as bull-fighting were outlawed.[51]

Greek writers have with one voice praised the rich Indian fauna and the fact is that rearing animals was one of the most paying professions. "The animal husbandry was among the systematic occupation of all classes of people—from the pedigreed royal race down to the gipsy tribes, and it was a respectable profession not unbecoming of a young grandee (*kulaputto*). For some it was the sole profession, for others it brought supplementary income with agriculture which was the main and habitual support of the farmer. Some maintained extensive farms and rose to the highest rung of the economic ladder as pastoral magnates, akin to the multi-millionaire *(astikotidhanam)* agricultural and industrial lords."[52]

The spirit of enquiry and adventure fostered by the Revolution gave impetus to the growth of industry in both the towns and the villages. "The villages were the productive units of the country given to tillage and small handicrafts. The towns were the centres for distribution and exchange of big business and industrial combines where, besides their own wealth, the wealth of the country accumulated and attracted in its turn learning and culture as well as luxuries and parasite professions like stage-acting, dancing, singing, buffoonery, gambling, tavern-keeping and prostitution."[53] Cultivation of

sugarcane and development of sugar industry was a remarkable feature.

Mining industry was developed. *Arthashastra* contains some details on mineralogy regarding how mines were discovered and exploited in plains and mountain slopes. The processes for smelting metals from ores have been discussed in books on the subject. People were variously occupied in seeking along the courses of mountain torrents precious stones like beryl, diamond, jasper, yellowstone, topaz or amethyst. Pearl-fishery was a flourishing industry in Tamil Nadu. Perfumery was a highly specialised art, the commonest perfume was sandal. The wood was rubbed into paste or oil was extracted out of it which was used along with aloe (*akalu*) as toilet.[54]

The huge agricultural and industrial production brought affluence and gave rise to flourishing towns and cities. The area conquered by Alexander in third century B.C. is reported to have contained no fewer than 5000 towns. Among the notable cities were Champa, Rajagriha, Sravasthi, Saketa, Kaushambi, Varanasi, Vesali, Mithila, Ujjaini, Takshashila, Pushkalavati, Kampila, Srinagari, Dantpura, Mathura, Dwaraka, Indraprastha, Sagala, Kanya Kubja, Nalanda, and seaports like Bharukachha (Broach), Surparaka (Ophir) and Tamralipta (Tamluk).

Architectural science was well advanced as the treatises on town-planning show. The *Arthashastra* refers to them making suggestions to improve the art of building for better health of the inhabitants. The engineering skills were of high level. The great monoliths of the Mauriya epoch estimated at about 50 tons each, and their transport and erection at such distant places as Topra near Amballa, Sanchi in Bhopal, and Nepalese terrain are surprising feats of engineering. If the capital of Sarnath is a testimony of Mauriya craftmanship, there are also several standing monuments of mechanical developments.[55]

With the huge agricultural and industrial production the Indian traders planned to carry their goods abroad and sell them in the foreign markets. "Trade was both foreign and inland, sea-borne and river-borne, export and import", says Radha Kumud Mookerji. "We read of prince Mahajantaka sailing from Champa to Suvarnabhumi, of a whole village of

defaulting wood-wrights escaping at night in a ship down the Ganga from Banaras out to the sea ; of passengers safely brought by ships from the sea by river up to Banaras ; of traders coasting round India from Bharukacchha on the west to Suvarnabhumi in the east and touching on the way at the port in Ceylon ; of a newly arrived ship laden with cargo which was brought up at the landing place by a hundred waiting and competing merchants ; and of ships large enough to carry 500 and 700 passengers. The eastern sea-borne trade was extended as far as China, and led to an extensive colonisation."[56]

When the Roman Empire too encouraged direct sea trade with India, the traffic became regular ; some seaports like Tamluk and Broach were constructed for the purpose. "From about the middle of first century A.C. India, more particularly the Deccan and the South", says Nihar Ranjan Ray, "came quickly to share in a very rich maritime trade with the Mediterranean world, and gold and luxury products from Roman West began freely to flow into the country. Slowly, but surely, the Deccan and also the North began to develop, along the river valleys, big emporiums of trade and commerce out of their old cities, and rural agricultural civilisation began to be transferred into a mercantile one, at least in the large centres of life and activity."[57]

By such commercial contacts Indians carried their culture, art and architecture to the far off countries and in return benefited by the intellectual and economic progress made by them ; the influence was reciprocal and the advantage mutual.

The Revolution with its stress on the principles of liberty and equality as also on self-confidence strengthened the sense of responsibility and fellow-feeling, spirit of cooperation and harmony. Voluntarily boulders were removed from the roads, rough places smoothened, causeways built, highways constructed, water tanks dug and public halls erected. The villagers were closely knit together by economic ties of different kinds. It was the duty of every villager to render full cooperation for execution of works of public utility. The village *shala* (hall) was a shelter for the stranded, an asylum for outsiders and an inn for travellers. For the villagers themselves

it was the centre for recreation, administrative affairs and intellectual discussions. And it is here that the collective charity was organised.[58]

To run public affairs of the towns and cities, municipal committees were set up which undertook not only building of roads and irrigation works but also handling of communal charities on behalf of the indigent and relief for the destitute in times of famine and other general calamities.[59] A.N. Bose says that "in public works and civic amenities, ancient towns even compare favourably with modern towns. Among public places the "Shanti Parvan" (of the *Mahabharata*) enumerates a market, a field for athletes, a hall of the nobility, a pleasure-garden, a garden for the assembly of officials and the council."[60]

The municipal committee of the city was divided into six sub-committees of five members each. The first looked after everything relating to industrial arts, the second to the care of foreigners, the third to the registration of births and deaths, the fourth to control of trade, the fifth to sale and auction and the last to collection of revenue. Collectively, the committees attended to matters of general interest as maintaining public buildings and places in proper order, regulation of prices of commodities, the care of markets, harbours and religious places.[61]

As in Medieval Europe, there were industrial combines in ancient India known as guilds. The guilds were meant to regulate distribution of profits and liabilities. The members of the guilds who carried on cooperative work divided their earnings (*vetanam*) either equally or as agreed upon among themselves.[62]

Some of the best fruits of the Buddhist Revolution were gained in the field of Art. Once Buddha told his disciple, Ananda, that the whole of holy life of man and not half (as stated by Ananda) was "friendship with the lovely, association with the lovely and intimacy with the lovely." The earnest artistic activity started with the passing away of Buddha. It is said that he gave instructions regarding the construction of reliquary mounds to be erected over his ashes. Soon *chaityas* (shrines) and *viharas* (monks, residences) began to be

built. But there was no attempt at iconography and Buddha's image did not appear until at least many centuries after his death. "His presence in countless Jataka tales", writes Christmas Humphreys, "and scenes from scriptures, which soon adorned each foot of available space on Buddhist architecture, was shown by a tree (Bodhi tree), a wheel (the wheel of law set turning at Sarnath), a stupa (burial mound), or else by the foot prints, or any saddle or throne, or even by his umbrella."[63] With the appearance of dissension among the Buddhists and the adoption of Mahayana doctrines images of Buddha were made at Mathura and other cultural centres. Gautama the man was translated in the arts into Buddha the incarnate principle of Englightenment ; the released spiritual energy had the opportunity to flower in the most beautiful Indian art. The spirit of man having been emancipated it gave the best of life in creative expression.

Traditionally, Hindu lawgivers have set four aims of human life : 1. *dharma* (morality), 2. *artha* (wealth) 3. *kama* (desire) and 4. *moksha* (liberation). During the heyday of the Revolution the first three were regarded as the only ends in life to be simultaneously pursued without giving undue prominence to any one of them. The fourth aim that of *moksha* was added to the list later on with the revival of Brahminism. Even the Brahmin statesman, Kautilya, insists that *artha* (wealth) was the chief of the three because the fulfilment of other two depended on it. Nevertheless, the harmony of the three pursuits of life was regarded as the ideal which formed the background of social life in Buddhist India.

The development of trade, industry and the arts as fruits of the Revolution is reflected in the general economic condition of the people and their habits of living. We have abundant references to very rich merchants—multi-millionaires of those days—both in inscriptions and in literature. Frequent mention is made of costly gifts given to different religious sects, particularly to Buddhist monks. From their dress, ornaments, houses and furniture described in books and reports of foreign travellers, the middle classes appear to have been well off. The relief sculptures in Bharhut, Sanchi, Sarnath, Ajanta, and Amravati bear this out. The sculptures and frescoes present

the whole history in art from puritan severity to voluptuous riot of colour and form. In his *Introduction to Indian Art*, Ananda Coomaraswamy remarks that this art belongs "to an age which could afford to permit itself the fullest enjoyment of life by right of innate virtue." Only a prosperous and free society could produce such things of beauty with gay abandon. Nihar Ranjan Ray observes: "The art of Amravati naturally reflects the disposition and attitude of mercantile social economy which manifest preference for transient pleasures and temporary values, exuberant expression of joy and passion, and courtly elegance and sophistication."[64]

If the commercial magnates and trading classes lived in luxury and affluence the lower classes were not neglected or subjected to hardships and miseries as in the pre-Revolution days. "There is no reference to extreme poverty or paupers as a class", observes Radha Kumud Mookerji. "On the whole people lived happily in peace and prosperity."[65]

The Indians of the Buddhist period took life easily and fearlessly. The hells and the other-world created by Brahmin imagination had faded into oblivion and death did not concern the people much. The Revolution had taught them new values and the greatest of these was to enjoy life to its full. The Greek historian, Arrian, was struck by the light-heartedness of the Indian race and remarked: "No nation is fonder of singing and dancing than the Indian."

8

Rise of Neo-Brahminism

BUDDHISM was the product of social conditions in India which developed after the downfall of sacerdotal supremacy; it was the ideology of those progressive classes which could not ignore the consequences of the dissolution of Vedic society. Rejecting the dogma of other-worldliness, Buddhism secured enthusiastic support of the rising business classes (vaishyas) besides the kshatriyas, shudras and outcastes, the most oppressed sections of the Brahmin society, who all flocked to it.

The new philosophy of revolution caught the imagination of the Indians, and like an onrushing tide swept the country from one end to the other. Within four centuries after the passing away of the Buddha, Brahminism was eclipsed ; its dogmas, tenets and traditions were ridiculed. Repeatedly challenging the supremacy of the Brahmins, the Buddhist and the Jaina texts openly declared kshatriyas to be superior. This view is supported even by the *Mahabharata* which says that the king dictated and the priest obeyed.

It is not suggested that the Buddhist Revolution had totally annihilated the Vedic religion or the caste system of the Brahmins. That was the consummation devoutly wished for but neither Buddhism nor Jainism were successful in achieving it. Brahminism with its declining and dilapidated institutions continued to exist though in a moribund state ; the elite of the Indian society and large masses of the people went

over to the Revolution which by removing strangling restrictions, brought them spiritual freedom, social emancipation and economic prosperity. Brahminism had fallen on bad days.

The crafty and astute Brahmins were, however, biding their time. They did not sit with folded hands witnessing the disaster unconcerned but were in search of an opportunity to stage a come-back. The deviations from the strict materialist conception and rationalist doctrines in the teachings of Buddha proved to be a fatal weakness of his philosophy and led to dissensions in the Buddhist order affording the needed opportunity to the defeated and demoralised Brahmins.

Early Buddhism did not admit the existence of any extra-natural or metaphysical intelligence or force such as *jivatman* (soul) or *Parmatman* (Universal Soul or God) which might cause the combination of atoms to create the universe. The aggregation of atoms was said to be a mechanistic process out of which arise the so-called "internal" or intelligent part of existence. This is the logical conclusion of Buddha's fundamental assumptions. But the Buddhist philosophy refused to draw this conclusion. Buddha studiously maintained silence and whenever questioned did not firmly reject the notions about the existence of soul or God. The reason must have been his acceptance of the theory of *karma*, *samsara* (rebirth) and *nirvana* (liberation). The world is full of sorrows and miseries, he held, and one must run away from it and that can be done by obtaining liberation. The ideas of karma, samsara and nirvana contradict the fundamental theory of Buddhist Philosophy. The Brahmin thinkers pointing out the weakness vigorously lashed at the revolutionary creed. It was a strong whip with which to beat the Revolution.

In order to refute the Brahminical dogma of eternal truth, the Buddhist rebels expounded the doctrine of momentariness of everything that exists in the universe and this doctrine began to be applied not only to the physical but also to the mental phenomena. The adverse effects of earthly existence—pain, sorrow, misery, suffering—were also declared to be non-permanent. It opened the path towards idealism. What is momentary can not be real and abiding. Therefore pain and suffering are only mental states which do not exist. What

exists is idea. Such an ideational deviation rendered Buddhism susceptible to Brahminical influence and subject to severest onslaughts of its antagonists.

While the positive rationalist-materialist character of Buddhism made it victorious and brought about the social revolution its ideational deviation led it to its defeat and downfall.

The deviation became pronounced when followers of Buddha were divided into different schools broadly classified under *Hinayana* (Lesser Vehicle) and *Mahayana* (Greater Vehicle). The most renowned teacher of the latter school, Nagarjuna, who flourished in the beginning of the Christian Era brought (philosophically speaking) Buddhism from a Brahmin family very close to Brahminism. He was a convert to Buddhism. He played a similar role in Buddhism as St. Paul did in Christianity. His doctrines are known as *Madhyamika* or "Middle Path" (not to be confused with Buddha's "Middle Path") and is so-called because, he claimed, it avoids the extremes of reality and unreality. He stated that everything which surrounds us is empty and whatever we see is an illusion. The highest goal can neither be called void nor not-void. His Madhyamika theory is therefore generally called *sunyavada* or School of Nihilism. It declares : "there is no reality, mental or material, nor is there anything real." Though nihilism of the Mahayana Buddhists is different from that of earlier nihilists because in it emptiness means indeterminateness, Nagarjuna stresses that *sunya* is not nothing ; it is, he asserts, positively speaking, basis of everything. His void is in fact *nirvana* or end to the cycle of rebirths. Nevertheless, being identical with pure consciousness, it has been described by critics as Buddhist Brahman, being considered as Ultimate Reality.

Mahayanists were initially named as the Mahasanghikas (members of the great community) and the Hinayanists were called *Theravadins* or *Sthaviravadins* (believers in the teachings of elders). The main deviation of the former was to deify Buddha and to assert that he was supra mundane (*lokkottara*) so that what passed as Buddha on earth was just an apparition. With this change, Buddhism became an established Church and a religion. It shed most of its revolutionary character and

devised ways and means to provide a place in the new religion for the laity. "Nagarjuna was the Luther of Buddhism", says Havell, "the apostle of *bhakti-marga* who would find means of expression for the deep-seated religious instincts of the masses through the way of devotion to the Divine Teacher rather than through the dry agnostic philosophy of Hinayana School. The latter, having accomplished the Buddha's mission of freeing the people's soul, fast bound by the chains of sacerdotal superstitions, was too cold and austere to satisfy the passionate and emotional nature of Southern races."[1]

Significantly, the Mahayana School was dominated by the Brahmins. From early days of the Revolution a handful of Brahmins had joined the Buddhist Sangha and taken active part in spreading the message of the Enlightened One. When their number became larger they were able not only to corrupt the order but also subvert the Revolution. Says Havell: "The popular party, headed apparently by Brahman members of the Sangha, detached itself from the primitive doctrines of the faith and under the name of the Mahayana, or Great Vehicle, compiled a revised version of the Dharma in which the divinity of Buddha was accepted as an orthodox belief, and Patanjali's teaching of Yoga became incorporated in the Buddhist canons."[2]

The rise of the Mahayana School proved alike the cause of Buddhism's greatest popularity and its extinction. Under the Mahayanists the creed of Buddha spread rapidly to every corner of the subcontinent and beyond its borders. The orthodox Hinayana survived in some pockets in South India where a prosperous merchant community lived. Buddhism was the philosophy of the revolutionary classes. Unfortunately in North India progressive social forces ceased to develop and Buddhism was compelled to seek the patronage of the upper classes which accentuated its ideational deviation. With the adoption of Mahayana by the followers of Buddha it became easier for the alert Brahmins to bring them under their influence. The difference between Buddhism and Brahminism was no greater than that which separated one Brahminical school from another.[3]

The Buddhist monks now began to take part in Hindu processions. "The Buddhist family which gave its chief support to the local monastery, would at all time rely on the services of the Brahmins at birth, marriages and deaths", says A. L. Bhasham. "If for a time Buddhism became to all intents and purposes a separate religion, denying the Vedas, the ordinary layman might not see it in that light. For him Buddhism was one of the many cults and faiths, by no means mutually exclusive, all of which led to salvation, and all of which were respectable and worthy of honour. Thus in medieval North India the Buddha came to be looked on as the ninth of the ten incarnations of the great god Vishnu, and Buddhism gradually lost its individuality, becoming a special and rather unorthodox Hindu sect, which like many others, did not survive...Buddhism in India was dead."[4]

Nor was the fate of Jainism very different from that of Buddhism. It is true that in Jainism there is no God or Creator and man's emancipation from suffering does not depend on the mercy of any Supreme Being. Man is the architect of his own destiny, stressed Mahavira. But Jainism more than Buddhism, is a philosophy of escapism ; the best life is the life of renunciation ; it is the shortest way to salvation. As stated earlier Jaina thinkers propounded the basic doctrine of their philosophy in what came to be known as *syadavad*, the theory of probability. They failed to affirm or take to its logical conclusion their materialistic conception of the universe. When all knowledge is only probable and relative, your opponent's view is as likely to hold as yours. The result of this spirit of accommodation led to its own failure. Brahmin philosophers made sayadavad as the thin end of the wedge with which to break down Jainism and expose the hollowness of its thought. Besides, Mahavira too like Buddha accepted the popular Brahmin theory of rebirth which was incompatible with the revolutionary view of inconstant nature of soul on which he had built his philosophy. Later Jainism was also not unwilling to admit some gods from the Brahmin pantheon into its own galaxy of spiritual and deified men. "Beginning with castes and sub-castes taken over from Hinduism, Jainism was progressively adopting a number of Hindu prac-

tices and beliefs, with the result that it was gradually becoming almost indistinguishable from the surrounding creeds. It lost its characteristic marks and its adherents then fell a prey to the prevailing proselytising forces."[5] Thus Jainas became a sect, albeit somewhat heterodox, of the Brahmin society.

Under the Mahayana school Buddhism ceased to be the ideology of social revolution or refuge for the downtrodden and the outcaste. For more than three hundred years the inmates of the Buddhist monasteries were recruited mostly from the poor and oppressed classes. The Sangha was not influential enough to win patrons among the Aryan aristocracy. But after having shed its original revolutionary fervour, the gates of monasteries were closed for the lowly and the disinherited. Opulent monasteries became the preserve of the upper class monks and nuns; slaves and outcastes were excluded by ordinances. "The multitude of diademed Bodhisattavas", observes D. D. Kosambi, "magnificent women in rich but highly revealing costumes and their handsome male companions stretch unbroken from Gandhara to Bharhut to Ajanta and Amravati. No rotting half-eaten corpse, no leprous beggar with festering sores mars the smooth harmony of sumptuous frescoes and reliefs to remind the monk of the Founder's doctrine. Nor does the art portray the normal hardships of the poorest villager (*pamara*), whose surplus the monk could eat, but whose misery was easily discounted on the callous theory that the suffering must have been deserved because of misdeeds in some previous birth."[6]

The standard of conduct set up in the Buddhist Sangha did not reach the high ideal of its Founder. The Master's message to the humanity that the good living alone led to emancipation from suffering was forgotten and the obscurantism of Brahmin priesthood entered the monasteries and nunneries. "Gone were the days", says R. Thapar, "when the Buddhist monks lived entirely on the alms which they collected in the morning hours for now they ate regular meals in vast monastic refrectories. Monasteries were built either adjoining a town or else on some beautiful and secluded hill-side far removed from the clamour of cities. Secluded monasteries were sufficiently well endowed to enable the monks to live comfortably.

The Buddhist Order thus tended to move away from the common people and isolate itself, which in turn diminished much of its religious strength, a development which one suspects the Buddha would not have found acceptable."[7]

Ashoka sought and to some extent succeeded in furnishing the ideology of the social revolution, but he was mistaken to believe that through widest publicity of Dhamma alone could the anti-revolutionary forces be checked for ever. He pandered demonstratively to the vanities of monasticism. Already in his time tendencies were visible towards the development of rituals among the Buddhists which were no less repugnant than the Brahminical sacrifices it superseded. "The cult of relic worship developed a ritual as elaborate as that of Vedic times, and popular belief in the miraculous was exploited to promote lavish expenditure on the building of *stupas* and monasteries for the safe custody of a supposititious eye-lash, tooth, or toe-nail of the Blessed One, or of the ashes of a Buddhist saint."[8]

By mere wide proclamation of the Dhamma, Ashoka expected to change human nature and give such spiritual insight to people as would make the Revolution everlasting. "But the millennium had not arrived and human nature was not changed by the affirmation of great spiritual truth."[9]

Even such an ardent admirer of Buddhism and Ashoka as Rhys Davids has to admit : "That he (Ashoka) failed was no wonder. The set of opinions he favoured with his patronage was enfeebled and corrupted by his favour. With all his evident desire to do the very best possible things, and always to be open to the appeals of the subjects he looked upon as his children, he left his empire in such a condition that it soon disintegrated and crumbled away. He made the boast (vain boast) that the Brahmin, who claimed to be gods upon the earth, had, by his efforts, ceased to be so regarded, and he himself committed the irreparable blunder of imagining himself to be a *deus ex machina*, able and ready to put all things and all men straight."[10]

Barely forty years after the great Emperor's death, the Mauriya dynasty ended when its last monarch, Brihadratha was assassinated by his Brahmin general, Pushyamitra, during a

military review in 184 B.C. If Kalhana, the author of *Raja-tarangni*, is to believe at least one of Ashoka's descendants, Jalauka, was anti-Buddhist and pro-Brahmin and is reported to have been an ardent *Shaiva* (worshipper of Shiva).[11]

Having beaten the Buddhists on both philosophical and political fronts, the Brahmins took the offensive for the restoration and revivification of the old order. They were determined to go to any length and adopt any means to destroy the Revolution and obliterate the names of the opponents of Vedas from history.

In this campaign no holds were barred ; even if truth was to be sacrificed Brahmin philosophers did not hesitate to do so. In the "Shanti Parvan" of the *Mahabharata*, Narada, messenger of the gods, is reported to have advised Shuka on the authority of Sanatkumara : "Speaking the truth is the proper thing ; but rather than truth, speak that which will lead to the welfare of all, because that in which the highest welfare of all consists is in my opinion the real truth."[12]

In the eyes of the Brahmins the welfare of all consisted in the destruction of Buddhism and the restoration of the Vedic religion, for which aim truth could be unhesitatingly overlooked. The first step in this direction was to destroy the heterodox literature, particularly dealing with materialist ideas and rationalist principles produced during the centuries when free thought flourished. "While at least the major texts of the other schools are preserved for us", bemoans D.P. Chattopadhyay, "all the original works of the Lokayatikas are lost beyond the prospect of any possible recovery. What we are actually left with are merely fragmentary survivals of the Lokayata, but *all these are preserved in the writings of its opponents*, i.e. of those who wanted only to refute and ridicule it."[13] No wonder that the doctrines and theories of Indian materialist schools have been distorted and Chattopadhyay has to warn the modern student that he should "always remain alert to distinguish between the vilification of and genuine information about the Lokayata."

But the Brahmins did not stop with destruction of the anti-Vedic rationalist literature. The vandalism also made Buddhist religious places as its target. Coming to power,

Pushyamitra wishing to gain notoriety decided to perform some unusual feat. "When questioning people as to why Ashoka gained fame, he was told that it was due to Ashoka having built 84000 stupas for Buddhism. Whereupon Pushymitra decided that he would gain fame by destroying these 84000 stupas."[14] Soon the nefarious practice spread and the defenders of Vedic cult emulated Pushymitra. Not only were the stupas and chaityas razed, the monks and nuns as also the Buddhist laity were physically liquidated without any pity or remorse. The ruthless policy of extermination continued so long as Buddhism remained a force to be reckoned with.

The renowned Kashmir historian, Kalhana, who lived in the twelfth century A.C. says that King Jalauka, instigated by wicked persons, ordered demolition of *viharas* because the sound of clarions disturbed his sleep.[15] In the reign of another Kashmir monarch, Abhimanyu, the Brahmin historian records, the Buddhists were murdered in large numbers year after year and to avoid being accused of the crime the King resided during winter for six months outside the Kashmir valley in Dharvabhisara and other places.[16] To exonerate his co-religionists of the crime, Kalhana attributes the genocide to heavy snowfall but exposes his partiality by adding : "During the period owing to some indescribable spiritual power of Brahmins who made votive offerings and sacrifices, were not destroyed while the Buddhists perished."[17] Another King of Kashmir, Nara alias Kinnara, adds the poet-historian, enraged by alleged abduction of a woman by a Buddhist, caused thousands of viharas to be burnt down and had the villages belonging to them occupied by the Brahmins residing in Madhyamatha.[18] The massacre of Buddhists and destruction of their religious places did not stop until Buddhism was rooted out from the valley. Kalhana concludes : "When the rites originating from Nila (the author of *Nilamat Purana*) had been reestablished by the King (Gonanda III), the bhikshus and the snow calamities ceased altogether (to give trouble)."[19]

In other parts of India the Buddhists fared no better at the hands of Brahmin temporal power. Professor P. Lakshmi Narasu says : "A century after Kanishka, Vikramaditya, King of Sravasthi, became a persecutor of the Buddhists. Mihirkula,

a worshipper of Shiva, slaughtered countless followers of Buddha. Sashanka, Raja of Bengal, proved in the middle of the seventh century A.C. an inveterate enemy of Buddhism and endeavoured a number of time to uproot the Bodhi tree... At the instance of Kumarila Bhatta the Buddhists were driven out of Kerala. According to *Shankara Vijaya* (Conquest of Shankaracharya), King Sudhanvan issued the following injunction to his people : 'From the bridge (of Rama in Ceylon) to the Himalayas, who does not slay the Buddhists, both old and young, shall be slain'... Sulpani, the great founder of the Bengal School of Law, made the very sight of a Buddhist atonable by the most severe penances."[20]

Refuting the claims of the present-day Hindu revivalists that Brahminism has always been tolerant of other creeds, P. Ramanathan writes about prosecution of Buddhists and Jainas in South India : "Apologists like Vivekananda and Dr. Radhakrishnan describe Hinduism as a religion which never persecuted, nay never proselytised...The impalling of 8,000 Tamilian Jainas on a single day by the Tamilian Brahmin, Thirignana Sambhanda, at Madurai around 600 A.D. is a matter which is even now celebrated by an annual festival in the Meenakshi temple at Madurai and at many other temples. The Vaikuntha Perumal temple in Kanchipuram is only one among numerous containing bas relief sculptures of the murder and torture of Tamilian Buddhists and Jainas."[21]

The Brahmin writers have gleefully stated that the heterodox faith of Buddhism was wiped out by a dreadful persecution held at the instigation of Kumarila Bhatta in the first half of the eighth century. This view has been accepted by the Western orientalists like Wilson and Colebrook. Indeed W. T. Wilkins makes the sweeping charge : "The disciples of Buddha were so ruthlessly persecuted that all were either slain, exiled or made to change their faith. There is scarcely a case on record where a religious persecution was so succcessfully carried out as that by which Buddhism was driven out of India."[22] Rhys Davids questions the veracity of this accusation. He observes ; "We must seek elsewhere for the causes of the decline of the Buddhist faith, and they will be found, I think, partly in the changes that took place in the

faith itself, partly in the change that took place in the intellectual standard of the people."[23] But the part played by persecution in destroying the Buddhist Revolution cannot be belittled.

The fatal blow to the Revolution was, however, dealt not by genocide of the Buddhists and Jainas but by the Mahabharata War. When due to their own folly the kshatriyas were divided and enmity led to the gigantic clash the counter-revolutionary forces took advantage of the situation in getting the kshatriya elite liquidated in the fratricidal war.

Despite the destruction of Lokayata literature, massacre of the Buddhists and the Mahabharata War the embers of the Revolution continued to smoulder for hundreds of years. Fa-Hien, the Chinese pilgrim, found in the fourth century A.C. Buddhism alive though everywhere in decay. In the seventh century his more famous countryman, Hieun Tsiang, reports "nearly two hundred thousand of Buddhist order of whom three-fourth still adhered to the older form (Hinayana) and one fourth were Mahayanists."[24]

Though the Buddhists continued to measure swords with the Brahmins, the former were playing a losing game. The end of the revolutionary era had arrived. "A study of the religio-philosophical literature, both Buddhist and Brahminical, of the period", says Nihar Ranjan Ray, "shows that from about the third and fourth centuries Aryavarta was in a great ferment of thought and minds and ideas came into conflict with minds and ideas, and in these and following centuries combatants came roughly to be ranged on two sides, one representing the thought of Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Asanga, Vasubandhu and Dinnaga, another represented by the *Yogasutras* and *Nyaya Sutras*, by Vatsyayana, Uddyotakara, and Kumarila, to name only a few. Out of this ferment and turmoil evolved neo-Brahminism, sturdy and vigorous in action, robust and virile in imagination, fertile in creation and comprehensively ethnic in origin."[25]

One may bemoan this outcome but it is futile to deny that it was inevitable under the circumstances. The fact of the matter is that in ancient India no rising economic class gained the necessary strength with which it could successfully challenge

the sacerdotal supremacy and destroy it for ever. In the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. the Vedic tribal order broke down and the Indian society was in a state of dissolution ; it caused suffering and hardship all around. There was universal dissatisfaction with the conditions of life as they were. Brahmins had prevented the growth of trading and mercantile classes though they were helpless before the warrior clan of ruling kshatriyas. The kshatriyas supported by the weak trading classes, were the only force to bury the dying order and found a new progressive society on its ashes. But they did not prove strong enough to administer the final blow. "All the schools of Indian Philosophy, quasi-materialistic or materialistic, rationalistic or atheistic barring the honourable exception of Charvak, bear the stamp of vacillation and diffidence. All looked upon Nature as a source of bondage, the freedom was not to be sought in breaking the bondage that is by understanding and conquering Nature but by the imaginary way of running away from the evil". The pre-occupation of the philosopher's mind is how to gain *moksha* (liberation) from *samsara* (cycle of births).

The idea of bringing Nature under control of man did not enter into the calculation of Indian speculation. Release from rebirth was the greatest aspiration of all. *Tapas* (self-torture) became the common means of attaining the goal. In neo-Brahminism, tapas was set up as great ideal and *tapsvi* (self-torturer), the ideal man. Says Rhys Davids : "From this time onwards down to quite the modern times this tapas, self-mortification, is a permanent idea...there is no question here of penance for sin, or an appeal to the mercy of an offended deity. It is the boast of superiority advanced by the man, able through strength of will, to keep his body under, and not only to despise comfort, but to welcome pain."[26] Tapas is not the conquest of nature : it can only help in blocking all the ways of knowing external nature. For that reason it means plunging headlong into the dark ocean of blissful ignorance.

In the social dissolution of ancient India, people saw that life was full of miseries and even the legitimate desires of man could not be satisfied. Instead of finding the ways to remove the miseries and fulfil the desires the philosophers laid

utmost stress on control of desires which would lead to freedom from the evils of nature and thus the misery would end. The revolutionary Buddhism and Jainism could not fully live down that corrupting tradition and were eventually vitiated by the poison. "The triumph of the doctrine of self-mortification as the way out of the miseries of life represented the defeat of the forces of dissatisfaction with, and the revolt against, the established order of Brahmin society. It was the triumph of the so-called spiritualist view of life and a tremendous social reaction."[27]

In similar circumstances, in ancient Greece, merchant princes rose in rebellion against the power and privileges of priesthood and created a purely materialistic philosophy. It was a powerful class with an effective voice and therefore succeeded in sweeping away the sacerdotal supremacy. The trading classes in India failed to achieve that success because they were weak ; hence their revolutionary materialist philosophy was also of a compromising character.

Some trade in large volume appears to have grown in certain regions of South India, which fact explains the establishment and persistence of Hinayana Buddhism in those parts. Says Havell : "The Aegean, Babylonian and Dravidian cultures...were essentially mercantile civilisations with a more limited spiritual outlook than the Aryan though in the nature of things they would leave more material evidence of their existence for posterity, for they were more concerned with the happiness which lies in the material possessions than in spiritual thoughts."[28]

9

Conflict, Clash and Confusion

IN the beginning of the Christian era, India was involved in widespread conflict, both physical and mental. Having shed its revolutionary character, Buddhism had lost vitality, vigour and charm ; it was in a process of decline. Brahmins were not slow in taking advantage of the situation and in staging a come-back. Religious discourses, intellectual debates, political power, social pressure and physical forces were employed to convert the Buddhist masses and bring them back into the Brahmin fold from which they had been "led astray". Buddhism, having become indistinguishable from the hoary Vedic cult, it was easier for common men and women to return and worship the well-known gods like Agni, Surya, Shiva, Brahma, Indra and Vishnu rather than the less attractive Bodhisattvas. Of course Buddha could not be given up but he was no longer an outsider ; he became one of the Brahmin pantheon and therefore adorable as the ninth of the ten *avatars* (Incarnations of God).

The educated and progressive classes stood apart. In their case the change was neither quick nor smooth ; they were passing through an intense intellectual crisis. It was clear that the days of Buddhism were numbered and Brahminism was regaining ascendancy. When mass reconversions were taking place, how could the intellectuals watch the movement unconcerned ? They were bound to follow the people but not

before the mental conflict was resolved? Buddhism had popularised egalitarian ideas, broken down caste barriers, abolished distinctions of colour and differences on the basis of sex, given equal social status to every Indian and brought economic prosperity which was more or less shared by all sections. The intelligent and the awakened classes were unwilling to surrender the freedoms enjoyed by the people in the Buddhist age. Therefore, even when the intellectuals outwardly professed Brahminism, at heart they had not renounced the doctrines of the defeated Revolution. The low caste shudras, the toiling multitudes, and women who had been trodden over in the later Vedic period but had been raised to the level of equality under Buddhism were also frequently betraying signs of uneasiness bordering on disloyalty even after their reclamation and admission to the Brahmin fold. The resurgent Brahminism thus stood on insecure ground facing the danger of being overwhelmed by the forces of dissatisfaction.

The initial response of the Brahmins to the disconcerting situation was to rejuvenate the old institutions with stricter observances and rigid adherence to the creed. The theory of karma and rebirth as we saw, had never become extinct and were only to be strengthened. It was easy to reinstal the soul and God on high pedestals. But not so easy was it to restore the respectability of the caste system and the Vedic rituals. No sooner had the reaction gained ground in or about second century A.C. and Brahmin leaders assured of their security than they compiled new laws and amplified old codes for the guidance of the people. They dealt with all respects of social life. What conception of society the law-givers had in mind is very clear from the rules and regulations which were promulgated and thrust upon the society. In his essay on *Raj dharma*, P.V. Kane concludes: "The authors of Dharm Shastras had a very low estimate of human nature; they believed that ordinarily men were depraved, that it was difficult to find a man pure by nature and that men were kept in the straight path by fear of punishment."[1]

The earliest and by common agreement the most respectable and famous of the lawgivers was Manu who lived in the second

century A.C. His code is known as *Manava Dharma Shastra* or simply *Manu Smriti.* Referring to it Dr. Beni Prasad, an eminent historian, remarks : "Caste privileges and disabilities are reflected in criminal law, especially on matters of morality and social hygiene . . . . For defaming a Brahmana, a kshatriya was to be fined a hundred panas, a vaishya from one hundred and fifty to two hundred, while shudra was to suffer corporal punishment. On the other hand, a Brahmana should be fined fifty, twenty-five and twelve panas for defaming a kshatriya, a vaishya and a shudra respectively. There was a uniform penalty of twelve panas for a twice-born man for defaming caste-fellow. If a shudra even mentions the names and castes of the twice-born with contumely, 'an iron rail ten fingers long, shall be thrust red-hot into his mouth.' If he insults a twice-born man with gross invective his tongue shal l be cut off 'for he is of low origin'. If he is arrogant enough to teach Brahmanas their duties, 'the king shall cause hot oil to be poured into his mouth and into his ears'. Even harsher and some times unspeakable are the punishments prescribed for insults which a shudra may chance to offer to men of superior castes."[2]

Manu is no less harsh to women. "A woman is never fit for independence", declares the celebrated sage, "that their fathers must protect them in childhood, their husbands in their youth, and their sons in their old age." "It was a settled rule that women had no business with the sacred text of the Vedas", says Havell. "It was a father's duty to find a husband for his daughter as soon as possible after arrival at maturity."[3]

The difference in the status of women in the revolutionary period and after the rise of neo-Brahminism has been well described by King Pandu to his wife, Kunti, as recorded in the *Mahabharata* : "Women formerly were not immuned within houses and dependent on husbands and other relatives. They used to go about freely, enjoying as best liked by them . . . . . They did not then adhere to their husbands faithfully, and yet, O handsome one, they were not regarded sinful, for that was the sanctioned usage of the times. That very usage is followed up to this day by birds and beasts without any exhibition of jealousy. That practice, sanctioned by precedent, is applauded by great Rishis. And, O thou of tapering thighs, the practice is yet

regarded with respect among the Northern Kurus. Indeed, this usage so lenient to women hath the sanction of antiquity. The present practice, however, hath been established but lately."[4]

And what was the practice under neo-Brahminism established lately to which the king refers ? Vatsyayana, the author of *Kamasutra* summarizing the views of the *smritis* (Hindu Laws) on the subject writes : "The woman is personally to minister to husband's comforts at table, on his reaching home and so forth. She shares her husband's fasts and vows, not brooking a refusal. She attends festivities, social gatherings, sacrifices, and religious processions, only with his permission. She engages in sports approved by him. She honours her husband's friends, as is their due, with gifts of garlands, unguents and toilet. She serves her father-in-law and mother-in-law and abides by their commands. When in their presence, she makes no replies, speaks few but sweet words, and does not laugh aloud... Above all, when her husband is gone abroad she lives a life of ascetic restraint, she gives up wearing all ornaments excepting the marks of her married state ; she engages in religious rites and fasts ; she acts as bidden by her superiors ; she does not go out to visit her relations except on occasions of calamities or festivities. When she visits them, she does so only for a short while and in company of her husband's people."[5] A domestic drudge indeed.

The evil of purdah was introduced by leaders of neo-Brahminism and forced upon women. "References in general as well as technical literature of the early centuries before and after Christ seem to indicate that married women in high families did not usually appear in public without veils."[6]

Greek writers of the early Christian era testify that the heinous practice of burning widows on funeral pyres of their husbands had started under neo-Brahminism. The Mahabharta records a few cases. Madri burned herself on the funeral pyre of her husband, Pandu, and the bereaved wives of Sri Krishna, the Yadava prince, immolated themselves in Indraprastha after his death.[7]

Besides the Buddhists, lower castes and women deserving suppression in the eyes of Brahmin lawgivers, were the trading classes. Manu placed merchants under all sorts of disadvantages. Sea-voyage was completely prohibited by the venerated sage because, among other reasons it encouraged heretical views by contacts with foreigners. It was from the days of Manu to the modern times that overseas travel came to be counted as one of the causes of "impurity".

It is not difficult to understand that the new social system could hardly enlist the sympathy or willing cooperation of the people, at any rate of the awakened and the progressive sections. It is true that Buddhism was on the run and the supporters of Vedic religion had captured political power in the greater part of the country. But to be masters of the land is not to captivate the heart of its people. When the nationalist historians praise the Hindu empires founded after the fall of Buddhism, they represent the opinion of the oppulent but tiny upper class and not of the toiling and suffering masses who were dehumanised by oppression and stood sullen and dissatisfied.

While the expropr ietors never had it so good, the expropriated were increasingly impoverished and compelled to live in squalor and wretchedness. It is not surprising that the latter lost all zest for life and sought comparative peace in self-denial, inactivity and renunciation causing a gigantic social problem.

Any impartial student of Indian history can see that the clash of interests between the upper castes resuscitated by the rise of neo-Brahminism on the one side and the disinherited and brutally exploited masses on the other was present in every sphere of social life. On the philosophical plane the clash took the form of antagonism between Vedanta and Samkhya systems which came to be increasingly owned by the exploiters and the exploited respectively at the decline and downfall of Buddhism.

Despite his concessions to the popular prejudice regarding karma and rebirth, the Buddha had built his system on the rationalist-materialist principles enunciated by the Samkhya. In the eyes of the progressive forces, corrupted Buddhism

might have forfeited the privilege of popular support, not so the Samkhya which continued to be looked upon with approval as fountain-head of freedom by those who had not entirely forsaken hope and led the disarrayed surviving forces of the Revolution. With the flag of the Samkhya held aloft, the Indian intellectuals fought the battle of freedom against heavy odds of reaction ; the Samkhya therefore became the bug-bear to the Brahmins.

It did not take very long for Brahmin philosophers to realise that it was not possible, despite destruction of revolutionary literature and massacre of the Buddhists, to wean away the people from their heterodox proclivities until and unless they were prepared to modify their own attitude and reform the Vedic religion to make it acceptable to the people. The bold and farsighted among them gradually undertook the difficult task. "Buddhist philosophy", writes Havell, "like modern science, recognised no arguments which could not be referred to the inexorable law of cause and effect implied in its interpretation of Dharma. When the Brahmins found that the sanctity of Vedic traditions no longer sufficed to gain acceptance of their theories they fortified their position by applying the same logical system to the interpretation of the Vedas, and by a searching investigation into the foundations of their beliefs."[8]

The Brahmins set themselves to revising, adding and altering the scriptures to appease the sections of Indian intellectuals who remained uncompromising and flaunted the Samkhya doctrines in the face of the Brahmins. "The neo-Brahminism found popular expression in the contemporary redactions of the Puranas and the epics that brought up-to-date the basic Indian notions of creation, preservation and destruction of life."[9]

It should not be imagined that any change was effected in the cardinal and basic tenets of Brahminism. They were meticulously upheld and maintained unimpaired, but they were presented through comprehensive commentaries and otherwise in a more acceptable form. Wherever possible old theories were supplemented with new ideas to make the orthodoxy less rigid and repugnant. But the core of Brahminism remained in tact. Alluding to the repeated changes in and

additions to the *Mahabharata*, Rhys Davids says : The poem has certainly undergone one, if not two or even three, alterations at the hands of later priestly editors. But though the changes made in the poem are due to the priests, they were so made because the priests found that ideas not current in their schools had so much weight with the people that they (the priests) could no longer afford to neglect them. They must have recast the poem with two main objects in view : in the first place to insist on the supremacy of the Brahmins, which had been so much endangered by the great popularity of the anti-priestly views of the Buddhists and others ; and in the second place to show that the Brahmins were in sympathy with, and had formally adopted, certain popular cults and beliefs highly esteemed by the people. In any case, there, in the poem, these cults and beliefs absent from the Vedic literature, are found in full life and power."[10]

Continuing to believe in moksha as the highest goal, the idealist philosophers as a concession to the materialist opponents went to the extent of accepting happiness as an objective of life. In the "Shanti Parvan" of the *Mahabharata* Bhrigu says to Bhardvaja : "In this world or elsewhere, all activity is for obtaining happiness, there is no other goal excepting this for *dharma*, *artha* and *kama*."[11]

The redaction and revision of the scriptures, it seems, did not suffice to meet the challenge posed by the diehard remnants of the revolution. If the men, particularly intellectuals, wistfully looking back to the halcyon days of Buddhist ascendancy were to be calmed it was essential that an adequate ideology be evolved which could be of help in convincing them and end their mental conflict. Various commentaries of the divine scriptures were produced to fulfil the need. But the work that invited serious notice and attracted attention was that of the orthodox philosopher, Badrayana, who flourished in 2nd century A.D. This intelligent Brahmin compiled *Brahma Sutras* (Aphorisms about Brahman) in which he investigated the teachings of all important Upanishads about God, the universe and the soul with its conditions of bondage and deliverance. Badrayana's work is called *Brahma Sutras* because it is primarily an exposition of the doctrine of Brahman. It is

also known as *Sharirika Sutras* (*Sharira* : "the body") since it discusses the unconditioned self. The author attempts to explain the obvious contradictions in the teachings of the Upanishads and endeavours to harmonise in systematic form the many approaches to truth made in the scriptures.

Never deviating from the basic principles of idealism, Badrayana maintained a critical attitude towards the Vedic Philosophy, discussing its positive developments in the Upanishadic period. But the guns of the author are mostly trained on the materialist opponents. In his aphorisms Badrayana presented what has come to be known as the Vedanta philosophy in an orderly, systematic and logical manner ; hence the work is also called *Vedanta Sutras*.

Badrayana's treatise consists of five hundred and fiftyfive *sutras* (aphorisms) divided in four chapters. Starting with the theory that Brahman is the Supreme Reality, Badrayana develops step by step the entire system in which the main thought centres on self being a part of the Universal Self or Brahman. He ends with the declaration that no one has the power of creating, governing and dissolving the universe except Brahman.

Badrayana's work is not set in the framework of philosophy ; it is more in the nature of theological interpretation of life's problems. According to *Brahma Sutras*, the Vedas are external and the final authority. Sruti and Smriti are two sources of knowledge which the author respectively calls *pratyeksham* (perception) and *anuman* (inference). He finds equal support in the scriptures for *Karmayoga* (Science of Action) and *Sanyasyoga* (Science of Renunciation). He believes that through ethical discipline the soul can secure a body suitable for acquirement of *Brahma Jnana* (Knowledge of Brahman) or self-realisation.

To Badrayana the world is not illusory but real and positive having its origin and absorption in Brahman. He is not very clear about the nature of soul though he discusses its relation with Brahman and the world. He describes the world's dependence on God and its reabsorption into the Deity.

The materialists and atheists, particularly the followers of the Samkhya, are a constant source of annoyance to Badrayana.

He tries to refute their theories again and again. In one chapter of his book he apologetically meets the objections of his opponents against his description of Brahman.

Badrayana called the Samkhya philosophy as *Pradhana Vada* meaning thereby that Kapila asserted *Pradhana* (*prakriti*, Nature) as ultimate reality while he himself believed in *Brahma Vada* regarding *Brahman* (Universal Self, God) as the Ultimate Reality. As Kapila stood for *achetana* (non-intelligent first cause) and Badrayana for *chetana* (intelligent first cause) the controversy was ultimately reduced to that between materialism and idealism. Judging from the fact that Badrayana took particular pains to run down the Samkhya teachers and disprove their theories and also considered them as his foremost opponents, it is easy to imagine the tremendous influence that materialist thinking still exercised on the people's mind after the rise of neo-Brahminism.

Another notable fact which emerges after a close study of the *Brahma Sutras* is that idealist thinkers continued to suspect the Samkhya *Veda virodaka* (opponent of *Veda*). "According to the classical tradition", writes Chattopadhyay, "only three schools of philosophy viz. Lokayata, the Buddhist and the Jaina are regarded as specially non-Vedic or *nastika*, while the Samkhya is considered to be a form of *astika* philosophy i. e. affiliated to the Vedic tradition. But this could not have been the stand-point of the *Brahma Sutras* according to which the Samkhya was clearly the strongest of the non-Vedic or anti-Vedic trends."[12] Of the sixty apphorisms of the *Brahma Sutras* directly refuting the Samkhya no less than thirty-seven were designed to prove its non-Vedic and anti-Vedic character.

Badrayana affirms a monistic view of the world while at the same time he accepts both *nirguna* (indeterminate) and *saguna* (determinate) views of Brahman. The merit of the *Brahma Sutras* lies in its being a concise compendium of non-Brahminism. It was readily accepted as the profound thesis of the Vedanta School. Badrayana's endeavour to end the mental crisis was successful to the extent that his work placed a weapon in the hands of those who were waging war against Buddhism and other heterodox creeds.

Badrayana, however, could not meet the points raised by those opponents of the neo-Brahmin philosophy who were uncompromising materialists or tenaciously adhered to the Samkhya doctrines. The *Brahma Sutras* is full of contradictions and vague in many respects. It could not show if monism be true how the views about the dual nature of Brahman being *nirguna* and *saguna* at the same time, could be reconciled. Another thing which remained unexplained was how changing and impermanent world could issue from such a cause as changeless and eternal Brahman. Then again the nature of Brahman being transcendant becomes doubtful if it is He Who assumes and develops the form of the Universe. Badrayana merely makes one statement after another on the authority of the principal Upanishads without taking the trouble of adducing any proof in support of his assertions to the satisfaction of a sceptic or a critic. "Thus it is" writes Ruth Reyna, an admirer of Vedanta, "that *Brahma Sutras* of Badrayana further promotes the indecision and vagueness characteristic of the Upanishads whose teachings it attempts to synchronise."[13]

There is little in common between the teachings of Kapila's Samkhya and Badrayana's Vedanta. While the former is essentially a rationalist-materialist philosophy despite its idealistic deviations, the latter is an out and out theistic-idealist system evincing complete faith in the supernatural and transcendental power. Therefore there is no meeting ground between the two. Any one who cherished faith in the Samkhya and at the same time professed belief in the Vedanta could not but feel confused and bewildered. Nevertheless, Badrayana's *Brahman Sutras* was hailed as an important work of neo-Brahminism. It played by no means an inconspicuous role in the thinking of the orthodox Indians. In the centuries that followed its appearance, the book was given an exalted and equal position with the Upanishads.

Not only did the wavering rationalists remain unreconciled to the thesis of Badrayana, but even large numbers of converts to neo-Brahminism continued to be obfuscated, ask questions and raise doubts about its tenets and beliefs. Obviously a more convincing teacher with a scheme of peace was needed to

expound the philosophy of the Upanishads, to clear the issues and set the doubts at rest. In the third century of the Christian era or a little earlier or later that philosopher was born, significantly in a kshatriya family, who gave to the Indian society the *Bhagavad Gita* which has played the most effective, the most decisive and historical role in evolving the Hindu ethos and the Hindu way of life.

It is to this outstanding piece of religious literature which is the main subject for discussion of this book, that we shall turn our attention in the second part.

PART 2

The Teachings of the Bhagavad Gita

10

The Author and his Time

AT the beginning of the Christian Era, Indian society was in a state of flux. Buddhism was on the decline and counter-revolutionary forces were marching ahead in long strides. Although the Brahmins had been able to stage a comeback to a position of eminence and power they did not feel sure of their ultimate success. So long as the Indian intelligentsia or even a substantial part of it entertained a lingering faith in the rationalist-materialist philosophy which gave birth to the heterodox creeds like Buddhism and Jainism, the Brahmins could not afford to lie on the oars or be complacent. The Brahmin doctrines and dogmas had, under the altered conditions, crystallised in the Vedanta philosophy which though comprehensively explained and discussed in a number of Upanishads, demanded further clarification to convince the questioning elite. Badrayana did his best to meet this need by producing the *Brahma Sutras* but his work proved insufficient to carry conviction.

Soon after Badrayana, or may be during his lifetime, was born a genius who composed the *Bhagavad-Gita*, a poem of 700 lucid verses, which was destined to play a historical role and achieve the greatest popularity as a scripture of the Hindu society. The author fully grasped the spirit of the times and effectively presented a thesis which, in a skilful manner, not only undermined the Samkhya but also elevated the cult of

Vasudeva Krishna of which God-worship is the predominant feature. "The poem was written" says W. D. P. Hill, "at a time when men were afraid of the influence of free speculation on the restricting power of caste. Religious ideas were filtering through the lower social levels, and the 'natural duties' of the various castes were being neglected or interchanged. Krishna was *avatara* at Kurukshetra not when the poem was composed, but it is reasonable to suppose that the fancied conditions of his time on earth reflect the actual conditions of the Gita age. Dharma needed re-establishment."[1]

Traditionally the *Bhagavad-Gita* is believed to have been a dialogue between Arjuna, one of the five Pandava brothers, and his charioteer, Krishna, a kshatriya chief of the Yadava dynasty, held on the battlefield of Kurukshetra (near modern Panipat) at the commencement of the Mahabharata War fought between two influential clans of kshatriyas in ancient India. The orthodox Hindus hold that every word of the poem was uttered as recorded before the war started. But among the scholars, both Indian and foreign, there exist divergent opinions about it. It is generally held that though the main points of discussion might have been raised and answered on the battle-field, their elaboration and verification was a subsequent work of the talented poet and thinker named Krishna-Dvaipayana Vyasa, the legendary author of the *Mahabharata* epic. In any case, the *Bhagavad-Gita* is considered by orthodox scholars to be of divine origin.

The Hindu writers, including B.G. Tilak, R.G. Bhandarkar, S. Radhakrishnan, S. Dasgupta and others, are generally of the view that the *Bhagavad-Gita* is an ancient scripture composed by a single author. Says Tilak: "I have shown with proofs that the present *Mahabharata* and the present *Gita* must have been written by one and the same hand. When these treatises are accepted as being written by the same hand, and, therefore necessarily contemporaneous, one can easily fix the date of the *Gita* by fixing the date of the *Mahabharat*."[2] But some other Hindu authors differ from this view. At least two of them, G. V. Ketkar and G. S. Khair, ardent admirers of the poem, think that there are at least three authors who composed parts of the *Bhagavad-Gita* at different times. In a scholarly

treatise entitled *Quest for the Original Gita*, Khair has shed light from various angles on his theory that different authors have contributed different portions of the poem during a period of nearly three hundred years (500 B.C. to 200 B.C.). He has specified the verses contributed by the three poets on the basis of style, ideas and approach to philosophical and theological issues. He has contended that one and the same author could not have expressed grossly contradictory ideas contained in the poem nor used different language, syntax and words which are found in it.

Some writers have challenged the thesis that any dialogue at all took place between Arjuna and Sri Krishna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. They think it is a myth, a figment of imagination of a poet and has no basis in fact or history. Mahatma Gandhi has entertained doubts about the claim that Gita is a historical work. "Even in 1888-89, when I first became acquainted with the Gita", he declares, I felt that it was not a historical work, but that under the guise of physical warfare, it described the duel that perpetually went on in the hearts of mankind, and that physical warfare was brought in merely to make the description of the internal duel more alluring."[3]

Although most of the Hindu writers and commentators now concede that there are a number of interpolations in the poem, they are still reluctant to accept the theory of plural authorship of the holy scripture. Dr. Radhakrishnan suggests that the text may have received many alterations in subsequent times but the author is one and the same person.[4]

Among the Western scholars many have challenged the Hindu stand and raised several controversial issues about the origin, authorship and date of the Gita.

An English translation of the Gita by Charles Wilkins appeared as early as 1785 A.C. which had been rendered under instructions of Warren Hastings, first British Governor-General of India. It was followed by other translations not only in English but also in German and French affording an opportunity to European orientalists to examine critically the literary merits of the poem and its philosophical content. Not being able to reconcile different doctrines presented in the Gita a theory of interpolations was advanced in 1826 by W. Von

Humboldt who held that only chapters I to XI and verses 63 to 78 of Chapter XVIII were included in the original Bhagavad-Gita.

A.B. Keith thinks that the Gita was originally an Upanishad of the *Svetaswatara* type but later it was adopted to the cult of Vasudeva Krishna. Richard Garbe whose critical comments were widely noticed by Indian scholars, said : "The theistic part is the original Gita, and the pantheistic part is the later addition. The theistic and *bhakti* part along with Samkhya-Yoga is the original; the Mimamsa and Vedanta portions are of later date". Summarizing his view, Garbe observed: "In short, in the old poem Krishnaism philosophically based on the Samkhya-Yoga is proclaimed; in the additions made in the recession, the Vedanta philosophy is taught". "For the most part", writes Hill, already quoted obove, "the theory of a recast document is founded on the fact that the poem attempts to reconcile so many differing points of view, and appears in many passages to be inconsistent with itself."[5]

As against these views Edward J. Thomas thought that "the tendency of modern criticism is in favour of the unity of authorship."

Like the controversy about its authorship, there are different theories about the time when the Bhagavad-Gita was composed. Such wide apart dates as 500 B.C. and 300 A.C. have been suggested or fixed by writers. Here again, while the Hindus display a tendency to declare the scripture as ancient with pseudo-scientific and semi-historic proofs, the foreigners are generally inclined to believe that the poem in its present form could not have been produced earlier than the fourth century A.C. Some feeble attempts have been made to assert that the Bhagavad-Gita was available in 1000 B.C. Jawaharlal Nehru says that "it was composed and written in pre-Buddhistic age."[6] This theory has been rejected by scholars because it is beyond doubt that the author was fully conversant with the Buddhist philosophy. D. D. Kosambi has pointed out that "without (knowledge of) Buddhism chapter ii 55-72 (recited daily as prayers at Mahatma Gandhi's Ashrama) would be impossible. The *brahmanirvana* of the Bhagavad-

Gita chapter ii, 72 and Chapter v, 25 is the Buddhist ideal state of escape from the effects of karma."[7]

Evidence of astronomy, literary style and meter of the poem as well as evolution of thought in India, have been pressed into service to stress their respective conclusions by some scholars. After much hair-splitting and extensive consideration of the views of some authorities on ancient Sanskrit literature, B. G. Tilak concludes: "When one considers all the proofs mentioned there does not remain the slightest doubt that the present Bhagavad-Gita was in existence at least five hundred years before the Saka Era (78-A.C.). The opinions of Dr. Bhandarkar, the late Mr. (Kashi Nath) Telang, Rao Bahadur Chintaman Vaidya, and the late Mr. Dikshit were more or less the same, and they must be taken as correct on this point."[8] Dr. Radhakrishnan thinks that "the Bhagavad-Gita is later than the great movement represented by the early Upanishads and earlier than the period of the development of the (six) philosophic systems and their formulation in *sutras*. From its archaic constructions and internal references, we may infer that it is definitely a work of the pre-Christian Era". He assigns fifth century B.C. as its date.[9]

Pandit Seetalnath Tattvabhushan is among the few Indian scholars whose intensive research has compelled them to arrive at the decision that the poem could not have been composed before the first century A.C.

The non-Indian writers are, broadly speaking, more objective in fixing the date. They do not think that the Gita is older than the Christian Era. While M. Winternitz and Rudolph Otto believe that the poem was composed in the fourth century of the Christian Era, Richard Garbe and J. N. Farquhar hold that it was produced a century or two earlier. According to Garbe the original work arose about 200 B.C. and it was worked into the present form by some followers of the Vedanta in the 2nd century A.C. In his introduction to the famous translation of the Bhagavad-Gita in English verse entitled *Song Celestial* Sir Edwin Arnold, a lover of Sanskrit culture, after considering the arguments that the poem is anterior to Christian era, observes : "The weight of evidence however tends to place its composition at about the third

century after Christ."[10] This view is corroborated by D. D. Kosambi who dates the work as somewhere between 150-350 A.C. nearer the later than the earlier date. In his opinion "the ideas are older not original, except perhaps the novel use of *bhakti*. The language is high classical Sanskrit such as could not have been written much before the Guptas, though meter still shows the occasional irregularity (8-10, 11 and 15-3 etc.) in *trishtubs*, characteristic of *Mahabharata* as a whole."[11]

If the social and moral conditions that give rise to the philosophical doctrines and religious notions contained in the *Gita*, are dispassionately taken into account, one cannot help agreeing with Edwin Arnold and Kosambi that the poem must have been completed in its existing form in the 3rd century A.C. Nevertheless, the authorship no less than the date of the *Gita*, continue to be the subject of controversy as much as ever.

But whether the poem was actually a dialogue between man and God, whether the dialogue took place on the battlefield or in the imagination of some talented poet, whether the composer was one or more than one is of lesser significance to us who are more interested in knowing the role that the scripture has played in the formation of the character of a Hindu, individually, and of the Hindu society collectively. We have to take the *Gita*, as it has been accepted by the Hindus as a holy book, and critically analyse its contents dealing with vital matters of human life. Without being influenced by preconceived notions or deep-rooted prejudices, we must judge the poem as a whole and its parts separately by no other yardstick than reason. We must studiously shun to read far-fetched meanings in common words used and numerous statements made by the author; neither must we add nor subtract from what has been said in their dialogues by Arjuna and Sri Krishna.

For the last sixteen hundred years the Bhagavad-Gita has been seriously studied, adored as a religious scripture and followed as a divine command. It has deeply influenced generation after generation of the Hindu society in this long period of history. It is of profound importance to know of what use the poem has been in moulding the character of the people, in forging their destiny and in directing the social affairs of the country.

Also, if the Hindus continue to respose faith in the doctrines taught by the *Gita*, what might be in store for them in future.

It would appear that by the time the *Gita*, came to be composed, the Aryans had reconciled themselves to accepting the swarthy Dravidians as equal members of the society and accorded their heroes an exalted place. "Krishna in the *Rig Veda* is a demon, his name being the generic designation of hostile dark-skinned pre Aryans."[12] But in the Bhagavad-Gita the same dark-skinned Krishna is the *avatara* of Vishnu who is the repository of *dharma* and the saviour of mankind. Did this change take place to make neo-Brahminism as popular among the non-Aryans as it was among the Aryans ?

Another notable development after the decline of Buddhism which the Gita indicates is the acceptance of neo-Brahmin philosophy by at least a section of kshatriya thinkers who, as we know, had served as the vanguard of the Buddhist Revolution. The author has shrewdly assigned the task of teacher to Krishna, a section of a kshatriya clan, when ordinarily the role should have been played by a learned Brahmin *acharya* (teacher).

To spread his ideas and theories effectively among the people of all classes, the author chose the well-known method of the Upanishads namely, dialogue between a confused, bewildered intellectual who asks questions to get light on vital human problems, and a skilful, awe-inspiring elder who is well-versed in the philosophy of neo-Brahminism and has completely identified himself with it. At the commencement of the Christian Era thousands of such perplexed intellectuals were thronging educational institutions and meeting-halls all over the country. Converted to neo-Brahminism, they however continued to applaud rationalist doctrines, egalitarian principles and humanist values. They were thought to be a source of danger and caused apprehensions in the minds of the leaders of the counter-revolution bent upon making their victory complete. It was to fully reclaim the confused elite and large sections of society influenced by them that Badrayana wrote the *Brahma Sutras* and it was with the same object in view that

Vyasa or some other gifted though anonymous author, composed the Bhagavad-Gita.

The poem consists of 700 verses divided into eighteen cantos. In the colophon at the end of every canto, the author claims that it is an Upanishad teaching *Brahma Vidya* (the knowledge of the Absolute) and *Yoga Shastra* (the Science of the Yoga).

No student of Indian philosophy can fail to see close relationship between the Upanishads and the Gita. B. G. Tilak has given a number of quotations from different Upanishads which the author of the Gita has incorporated in his poem.[13] Other scholars have noted similar concepts, language, style and phraseology in the Upanishads and the Gita. Indeed, a number of verses have been bodily lifted from the former and incorporated in the latter as fittingly as to seem to be more original in their new setting than in the Upanishads themselves.

In the dialogues, whether imaginary or real, Arjuna represents the typical fumbling, uncertain intellectual and Sri Krishna the authoritative, dogmatic and relentless scholar both of whom are sound in the Hindu society from those early days down to the modern times. Not without reason both characters have been taken from the warrior castes because the kshatriyas were the chief factor in making the Buddhist Revolution and must have stood as a hurdle in the path of counter revolution. To make the kshatriyas sing the song of neo-Brahminism was appropriately calculated to become effective in leading counter-revolution to its full fruition.

But Arjuna is not the intellectual whose knowledge of rationalist philosphy is sound or whose doubts are strong. His questions are mostly frivolous and superficial nor do they challenge the basic theories of Brahminism. From the outset he is inclined to accept the dogmas and tenets of Vedic religion, provided his lingering doubts are satisfactorily removed. In the India of the 3rd and 4th century A.C., when Buddhism had laid down arms in its struggle for human emancipation and owned defeat by accepting various irrational beliefs of Brahminism as part of Mahayana, there must have been countless educated and semi-educated Indians like the one

depicted by the author of the *Gita* in the person of Arjuna. It is to convert such socalled intellectuals wherever found and make them staunch followers of theistic religion of the Vedanta that the poem was composed.

Judged by his role in the Mahabharata War, Sri Krishna is the most representative philosopher of the Hindu culture which had been evolved after the defeat of Buddhism by the Brahmin thinkers. Commenting on the moral doctrines of Sri Krishna, Kosambi writes: "At every single crisis of the (Mahabharata) war, his (Krishna's) advice wins the day by crookedest of the means which could have never occurred to the others."[14] This spirit is reflected in the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gita.

It is, however, well to remember that the author of the Bhagavad-Gita was dealing with a very tough, complex and complicated cultural problem. No one should feel surprised at the many contradictions found throughout in the poem. "The different elements which, at the period of the composition of the Gita, were competing with each other within the Hindu system", points out Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "are brought together and integrated into a comprehensive synthesis, free and large, subtle and profound. The teacher refines and reconciles the different currents of thought, the Vedic cult of sacrifice, the Upanishadic teaching of the transcendent Brahman, the Bhagavata theism and tender piety, the Samkhya dualism and the Yoga meditation. He draws all these living elements of Hindu life and thought into an organic unity. He adopts the method, not of denial but of penetration and shows these different lines of thought converge towards the same end."[15] Whether the author was successful in synthesization of various thoughts is a different matter which we shall consider a little later, but there can be no denial that his task was immense. Clinching the issue about the aim of the author Hill says: "The sectarian author wished to insist on the absolute supremacy of Krishna Vasudeva, and at the same time to conciliate the enemies of his cult. The poem may be called an uncompromising eirenicon."[16]

To make the impact of his ideas more pronounced the author chose the battle-field of Kurukshetra as the scene of

the dialogue. It was an appropriate setting. Not only as part of the Epic the poem would be assured a place in the holy books of the Indian society, it would also create deep impression in the receptive minds of the religious people. Archie J. Brahm says : "Vyasa has indeed chosen a dramatic scene which prepares his audience with great expectation."[17] The senseless cruelty, the utter disregard of moral values, the absence of human affection, lack of decency and utter callousness dispalyed in the course of the Mahabharata War prepare the mind for pessimism, self-surrender and other-worldiness which are the main characteristic of the Gita philosophy.

11

The Bewildered Intellectual

IN the history of the world, wars have been fought with different aims, territorial acquisition being only one of them. Sometimes the underlying cause of a clash between belligerents was struggle for the ascendancy of a particular class by the suppression of other classes in a society. Though Brahmin writers have with one voice declared the Mahabharata War to have been the result of high-handedness of the Kauravas in depriving the Pandavas of their rightful share in the kingdom, the real reason has to be sought in the different ideologies espoused by the Brahmins and the kshatriyas. It is true that the war was fought between two clans of the warrior caste and on either side were arrayed various kshatriya chiefs of northern India, but behind the scenes, pulling the wires, were the leaders of neo-Brahminism who were deeply concerned in the outcome of the war.

There is evidence that freedom-lovers and progressives were strongly opposed to the war which, they anticipated, would spell ruin but, having already weakened, their opposition was a cry in the wilderness. Farsighted kshatriyas too disliked bloodshed and carnage for mere acquisition of territory; the war, they feard, would end in annihilation of the cream of their society. Arjuna feebly represented their views. But the decisive voice whether or not the war should be fought was of

the leaders of neo-Brahminism whose philosophy is elaborately developed by Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita.

The Mahabharata War proved a turning point in the history of India. It ended the last hope of rescuing the Great Revolution brought about by the rationalist-materialist doctrines ; it dealt the severest blow at progress and guaranteed the revival of Brahminism with its faith in transcendental power. In the titanic clash, the core of the progressive forces and the elite of the kshatriya class were destroyed ; the country could never again rise to those heights of culture it had scaled in the days gone by.

As opponents of the Vedas and patrons of heterodoxy brave kshatriyas were counted by the orthodox Brahmins as thorns in their side. So when prospects of internecine war between the two warrior clans of the Pandavas and the Kauravas brightened the Brahmins fished in the troubled waters. All kshatriya kings of North India, with the bare exception of the Kashmir raja, were involved in the war and this, the shrewed Brahmins must have calculated, would prove the most effective way of annihilating the still-struggling revolutionary forces and thereby rendering neo-Brahminism an absolute and unchallengeable power.

The dialogue between Arjuna and Sri Krishna which is contained in the Bhagavad Gita took place on the fateful occasion when the big armies were arrayed on either side of the battlefield ready to strike. By having chosen an appropriate time and venue for the holding of the dialogue, the author of the holy poem deliberately or unconsciously brought renown to it which has not been enjoyed by any other literary work, profane or sacred, produced before or after it in India.

Another master stroke of the author is in selection of the two characters who discussed the issues which were exercising the minds of intellectuals during the age when Buddhism was on decline and neo-Brahminism raising its head. The dialogue is not, as it would ordinarily have been, between a kshatriya and a Brahmin or between a Buddhist and non-Buddhist. Both Arjuna and Sri Krishna belong to different clans of the kshatriya the former, though not a convinced rationalist-materialist, is yet plagued by lingering scepticism and seems to entertain

hazy doubts about the usefulness of the changes that are taking place at the waning influence of Buddhism. Like thousands of other Hindu intellectuals, disturbing questions arise in his mind which need to be answered before he can fully reconcile himself to the change. Sri Krishna is a spiritually defeated kshatriya who is completely converted to the faith of neo-Brahminism and is, indeed, presented as the staunchest protagonist of the creed. But, as explained earlier, Brahminism has not remained what it was in pre-Buddhist days. If it is to dominate the Indian society, Brahminism must undergo further modifications and without discarding its cardinal principles, present a complexion that may be acceptable to the wavering intellectuals like Arjuna. Sri Krishna has fully realised this position.

In the period of frustration, helplessness and disorder which followed the decline of Buddhism, morality was at a low ebb ; human values like truthfulness, generosity, charity and pity were underrated, even fellow-feeling, affection for kinsmen and respect for elders were set at naught. Power, pelf and glory at any cost had become the life's aim. Everywhere there was scramble for them. This was abhorrent to those who still cherished lofty ideals and entertained regard for moral principles taught by Buddhism. But to those bent upon squeezing revolutionary forces out of existence, nothing was sacred and no weapon objectionable for use to achieve selfish aims. If to gain an end one had to wade through rivers of blood, be it of one's own kith and kin, the gruesome game had to be played and the ghastly drama enacted ; a devotee at the shrine of neo-Brahminism should have no hesitation to be the actor. Only the callous and merciless deeds would have to be rationalised and philosophically explained as noble and sublime.

On the historic battlefield of Kurukshetra, when the armies of the Pandavas commanded by Bhima with their allies on one side, and the forces of the Kauravas headed by Bhishma with their supporters on the other, were ready to cross swords, Prince Arjuna, addressing his charioteer, Sri Krishna, asked a vital question in simple, unvarnished language which gives a clue to his noble character and human intentions. "Seeing these my kinsmen, O Krishna, arrayed and eager to fight", he

spoke in deep anguish, "my limbs fail and my mouth is parched, my body quivers and my hair stand on end, (my) *gandiva* (bow) slips from my hand, and my skin boils all over. I am not able to stand and my mind is whirling. I see adverse omens, O Keshava, I cannot foresee any advantage from slaying my kinsmen in the battle ; I desire no victory, nor kingdom, nor pleasure. What is kingdom to us, what enjoyment or even life ; for those for whose sake we desire kingdom, enjoyment and pleasures, they stand here in battle abandoning life and riches."[1]

Continuing in the same strain Arjuna goes on to say :

> "Among those arrayed on the battlefield are teachers, fathers, sons as well as grandfathers, brothers, mothers fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law and other relatives. These I do not wish to kill, though myself slain, O Madhusudana, even for the sake of the kingship of the worlds, how then (can I want them killed) for gaining the earth ? Slaying these sons of Dhritarashtra, what pleasure can be ours, O Janardana ? Killing these desperadoes, sin will sürely take hold of us. Therefore we should not kill the sons of Dhritarashtra, our relatives; for how can we be happy after killing our kinsmen, O Madhava ? Although these (sons of Dhritarashtra) with intelligence overpowered by greed, see no guilt in the destruction of a family, no crime in hostility towards friends, why should not we learn to turn away from such a sin, O Janardana, who see evil in the destruction of a family"?[2]

Explaining the latter part of Arjuna's anguish, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan comments : "They (the Kauravas) are striken blind by greed and have no understanding but we are guilty of the wrong. Even if we assume that they are guilty of selfish passion and greed, it is a wrong to slay them and it is a greater wrong because they who are blinded by passion are unconscious of the guilt they are committing, but our eyes are open and we see that it is a sin to slay."[3]

The simple but impressive and moving statement of Arjuna describes natural and spontaneous reactions of a decent mind to the horrors of bloodshed, holocaust and war in general. Though a warrior-prince deprived of his legitimate inheritance, he abhorred violence and was reluctant to seek power and terri-

tory by slaying kinsmen, friends, relatives and multitudes of other innocent human beings. Is it worthwhile or any the least laudable to achieve power by such heinous means ? he asks. There is neither sense nor reason behind it. The argument that the enemy (sons of King Dhritarashtra) are prepared to kill their kinsmen and other innocent warriors and have no qualms in doing so does not appeal to Arjuna as a defence for reacting in a similar savage manner. A man of culture should not submit to unreason like his uncivilized opponent and become guilty, he asserts. That way human misery cannot be ended. One who is intelligent and virtuous and knows what is morally right should follow the straight path irrespective of what the opposite party choses to do.

This method of formulating the issue confronting the kshatriyas shows that Arjuna was not fully convinced of the righteousness of neo-Brahmin philosophy and continued to labour, however slightly, under the influence of the Samkhya-based Buddhism. Arjuna had raised the weighty point which must have been in the minds of innumerable intellectuals who were hesitant to accept neo-Brahminism, though they had lost faith in revolutionary Buddhism. Arjuna's question has, as we shall see, echoed and re-echoed through the corridors of Indian history till the modern times without getting the right reply.

Had Arjuna confined his statement to the expression of human and rational reactions he had to the impending disaster, he would have left no room for Sri Krishna to inflict a moralising discourse on him. Arjuna's position would have been unassailable and possibly other means than the war would have been adopted to seek a compromise between the Pandavas and the Kauravas to settle the territorial dispute. In that case, Arjuna would have come down in Indian history as a great humanist thinker. But his mind had already been poisoned by the ill-winds of counter-revolution. He betrayed a weakness in his stand by expression of solicitude for Brahmin rituals when he carried the argument further by observing :

"In the destruction of the family the immemorial family traditions perish and in the perishing of traditions lawlessness overcomes the whole family. Owing to predominance of

lawlessness O Krishna, the women of the family become corrupt; when women are corrupted, O Varshneya, (Krishna) there ariseth caste confusion. This confusion draggeth to hell the slayers of the family and family (itself). For deprived of their offerings of rice balls and water the spirits of their ancestors fall. By such caste confusing misdeeds of the slayers of the family, the everlasting caste laws and family customs are destroyed. The abode of the men whose family customs are extinguished is everlastingly in hell. Therefore, alas, we are engaged in committing a great sin in endeavouring to kill our kindred from greed to kingship. If the sons of Dhritarashtra, weapon in hand, should slay me, unresisting unarmed, in the battle, that would be better for me."[4]

From these words of agony it is clear that the mind of Arjuna is not exercised so much by the distressing thought of shedding innocent blood as by corruption of caste, destruction of family customs, stoppage of liberation and rice balls to dead ancestors, and abolition of Vedic rituals in general which had been devalued in the Buddhist age but were revived by the rise of neo-Brahminism. Though Arjuna was pleading for preservation of human values like peace at any cost, non-violence, nobility, forgiveness, generosity, unselfishness and unilateral liberalism, he felt, as a matter of fact, more distressed at the violation of Brahmin dogmas, traditions and rituals.

The divided mind became an unbearable burden and, over-borne by grief, Arjuna, casting away his bow and arrow, sank down in his seat in the chariot. The Pandava Prince was over-come by pity, his eyes were filled with tears and his mind was much depressed and troubled. The sharp-witted Sri Krishna lost no time in seizing upon the mental perturbation of the Prince and without touching the cogent points raised by him tickled Arjuna's vanity by addressing him thus : 'Whence has this ignoble, infamous, heaven-closing dejection befallen you. Yield not to impotence, it does not befit you. Cast off this paltry faint-heartedness, O Parantapa (Arjuna), and stand up."[5]

Sri Krishna's gentle and affectionate admonition demoralised the confused intellectual and exposed the fact of his having

been affected by the change of the time. Arjuna frankly admits his bewilderment :

"I do not know which for us is better, that we conquer them or they conquer us. Those whom having slain, we should not care to live, even these, the sons of Dhritarashtra, are arrayed against us. My heart is weighed down with the weakness of pity. With my mind bewildered about my duty, I ask thee. Tell me for certain which is better. I am thy pupil ; teach me, who am seeking refuge in thee. I do not see what will drive away this sorrow that withers up my senses, even I should attain rich and unrivalled kingdom or even the sovereignty of the gods."[6]

The acuteness of Arjuna's anguish born of the indecisiveness of his mind is tersely reported by Sanjaya, the recorder of the dialogue. He says ; "Having thus addressed Hrishikesha (Krishna) the mighty Gudakesha (Arjuna) said to Govinda (Krishna) I will not fight and became silent."[7]

On the one hand, Arjuna acknowledged Sri Krishna, the exponent of neo-Brahminism, as his guru and sought refuge in him, on the other, he tenaciously struck to the resolve of refraining from fighting the senseless war which he had made independently guided by reason and a sense of human responsibility. Comments Dr. Radhakrishnan ; "Arjuna without waiting for the advice of the teacher, seems to have made up his mind. While he asks the teacher to advice him, his mind is not open. The task of the teacher becomes more difficult."[8]

Did the teacher succeed in removing the mental confusion of his pupil by relieving him of indecisiveness and by fully converting him to neo-Brahmin creed ? We shall have closely to examine this point of vital significance in the following chapters. At the end of the dialogue Arjuna says his doubts have vanished but a critical study of the Gita would make one wonder if this is correct. For not only his volley of questions throughout the dialogue betray his persistent confusion, but at the end also, in a mood of utter resignation, he accepts to do as commanded by Sri Krishna and not as he would have done of his own accord.

12

The Skilful Mentor

THE social malaise generated by the defeat of the Buddhist Revolution gave rise to several knotty problems which the author of the Bhagavad-Gita was called upon to solve. In the dialogues between Arjuna and Sri Krishna these problems are brought up one by one and dexterously tackled with the main purpose of mopping up the surviving revolutionary elements in the country.

The first and foremost problem was the firm determination of Arjuna not to fight ; it had to be weakened and the prince persuaded to participate in the war and be instrumental in emasculating the kshatriya warrior class. The second problem was the challenge of the materialists and atheists who, though beaten, were still struggling to reassert themselves. It had to be met by reestablishing the supremacy of Brahmin dogmas and beliefs. The third problem was born of the dissatisfaction and sullenness of the toiling masses and labouring intellectuals who refused to work and resorted to non-cooperation by renunciation on a large scale in order to escape the tyrannies and exploitation by the upper castes. There were other problems less important when compared with these three, but by no means trifling such as restoration of the authority of the *shastras* (scriptures), sanctity of rituals and dignity of caste. To all these adequate attention was paid at the proper place and time in the course

of the discussions in a way that they did not grate upon the ears.

The author of the Gita like all Brahmin thinkers of the age, realized that the root of the ills lay in the general acceptance of the doctrines of Rationalism. As stated earlier the Samkhya was the dominant philosophy even after the decline of Buddhism. The Shanti Parvan of the *Mahabharata* records : "There is no knowledge equal to Samkhya nor power equal to Yoga."[1]

So long as the people continued to have faith in the Samkhya the future of neo-Brahminism could not be bright. But, unlike Badrayana, the author of the Gita, Dvaipayana Vyasa, did not bend his energy to refute the Samkhya and thereby assert the infallibility of theism. He opened his sermon with unqualified appreciation of the Samkhya and even at times questioned the superiority of the Vedas.

Vyasa must have seen that by making a frontal attack on the Samkhya Badrayana had achieved no particular success because the materialist theory of Prakriti had struck deep roots in the Indian soil ; it was therefore foolish, even hazardous, to denounce it outright. Though the author of the Gita acknowledges his debt to Badrayana's *Brahma Sutras* which he calls "well reasoned and conclusive expressions"[2] he does not follow the latter at any rate in the earlier part of the dialogues, in refuting rationalist-materialist theories. An altogether new line of approach has been adopted in the Gita to undermine the forces of irreligion and profanity. The Samkhya is owned and praised but distorted and presented in a form as to make it substantially similar to the Vedanta and, indeed, indistinguishable from it.

Admitting that Arjuna was speaking words of wisdom, but without answering his cogent and clearly stated objection against participation in the war, Sri Krishna affectionately chides him for feeling depressed : "Wise men do not grieve for the dead or for the living, stresses the Blessed Lord."[3]

Totally ignoring the issues raised by Arjuna, Sri Krishna jumps headlong into the river of mystic philosophy and theism. He explains in brief what he calls the Samkhya, leaving its details for a later discourse. The burden of Sri Krishna's

eloquent thesis is that "the soul is eternal, indestructible and immeasurable while the body is finite."[4] Since that is so, Arjuna should not, emphasises Sri Krishna, grieve over the impending carnage and slaughter of his kith and kin: "Even if thou thinkest that the self is perpetually born and perpetually dies (reference is probably to the plurality of souls in heterodox thought), even then, O mighty-armed (Arjuna), thou should not grieve."[5] Therefore, learn to endure agony and anguish. "Contact of senses with their objects, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), gives rise to cold and heat, pleasure and pain. They come and go and not last for ever."[6] The killing in the war may be excruciatingly painful but the feelings will not be lasting; therefore this is no reason to shirk from fighting.

Now though this may be a philosophy of life, it is certainly not what Kapila taught or other Samkhya teachers maintained. Even Dr Radhakrishnan has to admit: "The teacher explains in brief in verses 11-38 the wisdom of the Samkhya philosophy. The Samkhya does not refer to Kapila's system but to the teachings of the Upanishads."[7] Why should then either Sri Krishna or Dr Radhakrishnan call it the Samkhya and not the Vedanta passes one's comprehension.

Be that as it may, Sri Krishna felt that even spurious Samkhya was not readily acceptable to Arjuna; therefore the great teacher of neo-Brahminism next resorted to rather unspiritual method of provoking caste pride and inborn longing for power of the kshatriya prince. Sri Krishna remonstrates: "Looking to your own duty thou should not tremble, for there is nothing more welcome to kshatriya than righteous war. The kshatriya who obtains such a fight unsought like an open door to heaven should be happy. If, however, you will not carry on this righteous warfare, then having cast away your own duty and your honour you will incur sin."[8] Sri Krishna proceeds: "Other men will recount your perpetual dishonour and to one highly esteemed dishonour exceeds death. The great cart-warriors will think that you fled from the battle from fear, and you who was highly thought of by them, will be lightly held. Many unseemly words slandering your strength will be spoken by your enemies. What

should be more painful than that ; (on the other hand) if you are slain you will obtain heaven but if you are victorious you will enjoy the earth."[9]

Apart from the fact whether any war can be righteous, Sri Krishna fails to meet Arjuna's point that it is unworthy of a decent human being to enjoy even the rulership of the whole world after shedding blood of near relations and friends besides thousands of innocent warriors. Simply put, Arjuna's question is : Should political rights get precedence over demands of humanity ? This remains unanswered by Sri Krishna and Arjuna stands unmoved.

Next the great teacher gives a discourse on Yoga to tempt the disciple because, as Sri Krishna says, "in this there is no loss of effort, nor is there transgression. Even a little of this knowledge (of Yoga) protects from great fear."[10] The Yoga of the Gita, however, does not mean Patanjali Yoga, as pointed out by Dr. Radhakrishnan. Sri Krishna interprets it in a manner as to support the philosophy of non-dualism. It is the Yoga of knowledge.[11] And what is the essence of that knowledge ? Says Sri Krishna : "Thy business is with action only, never with its fruits ; so let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor be thou to inaction attached. Dwelling in union with the divine, O winner of wealth (Arjuna), renouncing attachments and balanced evenly in success and failure ; equilibrium is called Yoga."[12]

To make his conception of Yoga acceptable, Sri Krishna accords a high place to it by even undervaluing the Vedas : "When thy mind bewildered by the Vedic texts shall stand unshaken, then shall thou attain Yoga."[13] Such a clever approach made a dent in Arjuna's stubborn stand. Forgetting the basic issue raised by himself, which led to the dialogue, the Pandava Prince started asking for clarification of the philosophy propounded by Sri Krishna. He asks : "What the mark of him who is stable of mind, steadfast in contemplation, O Keshava (Krishna) ? How doth the stable-minded talk, how doth he sit, how walk ?"[14] What relevance has this question to his initial objection to fight ? one is tempted to ask. With the rigidity on the part of Arjuna beginning to melt, Sri Krishna puts across for the first time the idea of personal God

which is the heart of the Gita philosophy. He asserts : "O Arjuna, the excited senses of even a wise man, though he be striving, impetuously carry away his mind. Having restrained them he should sit harmonised, I his supreme goal ; for whose senses are mastered of him the understanding is well poised."[15]

Sri Krishna's logic is hardly convincing. On the one hand he frequently urges Arjuna to rise, fight and gain his kingdom, on the other, he affirms that "he who abandons all desires and acts free from longing, without any sense of meanness or egotism, attains to peace."[16] The Pandava Prince sharply reacts to the contradictory statements and asks : "If thou deemest that (the path of) understanding is more excellent than (the path of) action why then do you urge me to do this savage deed ?[17] Such utterances of Sri Krishna have further "confused and bewildered Arjuna's intelligence and he wants to be told decisively what is the thing by which he can attain the highest good."[18] Again disregarding the question of war and peace pointedly raised by Arjuna, Sri Krishna gives a different direction to the talk and tries to show that there is no difference between the Samkhya and the Yoga or, in other words, that *jnana* (wisdom) is not incompatible with *karma* (action). The greatest emphasis is laid on the importance and desirability of activity ; the Yoga is made to excel the Samkhya and belong to remote antiquity. When Sri Krishna claims to have lived and taught this philosophy of Yoga in ancient times, the rationalist Arjuna expresses astonishment which makes the former to expound the theory of *avataras* (incarnations of God). Delineating the theory Sri Krishna now praises wisdom (knowledge) : "As the fire which is kindled turns its fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, even so does fire of wisdom turn to ashes all action."[19]

This vacillation on the part of Sri Krishna in alternately declaring knowledge and action to be superior, causes confusion to Arjuna and he protests : "Thou praisest, O Krishna, the renunciation of works (by knowledge) and again their unselfish performance. Tell me for certain which one is the better of the two ?[20] Unable to know his own mind or unwilling to take sides, Sri Krishna declares that "performance of works is better than their renunciation,"[21] but, soon after, he asseverates that "it is ignorant people who speak of

renunciation (Samkhya) and practice of works (Yoga) as different, not the wise. He who sees that the ways of renunciation and of action are one he (truly) sees."[22] Sri Krishna takes this opportunity to elaborate the philosophy of work without attachment which is considered to be the greatest contribution of the Bhagavad-Gita to perennial philosophy : "He who does the work which he ought to do without seeking its fruit he is the *sanyasin*, he is the *yogin* not he who does not light the sacred fire, and performs no rites."[23]

Whether or not the long expositions of the new-fangled theories allayed the doubts and removed the confusion in the mind of Arjuna is debatable but it is safe to say that from having his feet firmly set on real earth he was flown, by Sri Krishna's tactics, into the unreal atmosphere of mysticism ; for his ejaculations and questions no longer pertain to human problems of social justice and rational morality, they are from now onwards about the other world and the Eternal : "I see no stable foundation for Yoga on account of restlessness"[24] ; "mind is very fickle, it is impetuous, strong and obstinate, it is difficult to control as the wind,"[25] "he who cannot himself though he has faith, with the mind wandering away from Yoga failing to attain perfection in Yoga, what way does he go[26], "does he not perish like a rent cloud, fallen from both, and without any hold and bewildered in the path that leads to the Eternal ?"

Hearing such questions Sri Krishna must have chuckled and when Arjuna asked further : "what is Brahman ? What is the Self and what is action ? What is said to be the domain of the elements and what is the domain of the gods"[27] the great teacher must have felt pleased at the success of his own skill and art of persuasion. For Arjuna had ceased to talk about impending wanton bloodshed, revolting selfishness and shameful massacre of kith and kin. The Pandava Prince's stubborn attitude had flagged and he was now more interested in Yogic practices and abstract theories of religion than in the welfare of society.

At this stage Sri Krishna throws away the garb of man, assumes Godhood and encourages the disciple, who is now in proper frame of mind, to proceed further on the path of

religion. The mentor takes him into confidence: "To thee, who does not cavil, I shall declare this profound secret of wisdom combined with knowledge by knowing when thou shalt be released from evil. This is sovereign knowledge, sovereign secret, supreme sanctity, known by direct experience, in accord with the law, very easy to practise and imperishable."[28] The supreme secret is, however, no other than exaltation of God and importance of reposing complete faith in Him for ultimate deliverance: "Fix thy mind on Me; to Me be devoted; worship Me; revere Me, thus having disciplined thyself, with Me as thy goal, to Me shalt thou come."[29]

The arrow hits the mark; the critic in Arjuna is vanquished; he acknowledges defeat: "Thou art the Supreme Brahman, the Supreme Abode and the Supreme Purifier, the Eternal, Divine person, the first of the gods, the Unborn, the All-pervading. I hold as true all this that thou sayest to me."[30] Arjuna only wants to know the various aspects of the Blessed Lord in which He may be thought of.[31] Sri Krishna obliges the disciple by giving a long list of things in which God is manifested but though Arjuna acknowledges again that by "the discourse concerning self", and "the supreme mystery" revealed to him his bewilderment is gone, yet he desires to see "the divine form of the Blessed Lord, the Imperishable Self."[32]

Fully convinced that Arjuna's imagination is excited to the highest pitch enabling him to have the wildest of wild hallucinations, Sri Krishna describes the fantasy of *Vishwarupa* (World Appearance) and directs him to see things as desired by the Blessed Lord. But reason and fantasy ill go together and any element of reason in Arjuna will prevent him from indulging in fantasy. Sri Krishna says: thou canst not behold Me with this (rational or human) eye of yours; I will therefore bestow on thee the (imaginative) eye. Behold my divine power."[33]

Deprived of the critical, reasoning faculty and having been worked into a state of mental frenzy, Arjuna saw shuddering and horrifying pictures through his imagination, and exclaimed:

> When I see thee touching the sky, blazing with many hues, with the mouth opened wide, and large glowing eyes, my inmost soul trembles in fear and I find neither steadiness nor peace, O Vishnu (Krishna).
> When I see thy mouths terrible with their tusks, like Time's devouring flames, I lose sense of the directions and find no peace. Be gracious O, Lord of gods, Refuge of the worlds.[34]

Frightened and spiritually crushed by these hideous scenes, Arjuna pays unqualified tributes to the Supreme Self in the form of Sri Krishna :

> "Prostrate in front of thee, prostrate behind, prostrate on every side of Thee, boundless in power and immeasurable in might. Thou dost penetrate all and therefore thou art all."[35] "Thou art the father of the world, of the moving and the unmoving. Thou art the object of its worship and its venerable teacher. None is equal to thee ; how then could there be one greater than thee in the three worlds, O thou of incomparable greatness."[36]

Sri Krishna is not slow in accepting submission and immediately puts the subdued critic under obligation :

> "By My grace thou hast seen, O Arjuna this loftiest form, luminous, universal, infinite and primal which none but thee has seen before. Neither by the Vedas, nor by sacrifices nor by study nor by gifts nor by ceremonial rites can I with this form be seen in the world of men by any one else but thee."[37]

The real purpose of hypnotising the Pandava Prince is to shatter his iron will against fighting and participating in the impending war. Therefore, Sri Krishna pointedly draws the attention of Arjuna to that aspect of the *Vishwarupa* (World Appearance) :

> "Time am I world-destroying grown mature, engaged here in subduing the world. Even without thee (thy action) all the warriors standing arrayed in the opposing armies shall cease to be ; thou shalt alone survive. Therefore arise thou and gain glory. Conquering thy foes, enjoy a prosperous kingdom. By Me alone are they slain already. Be thou merely the occasion, O Arjuna, Slay Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna and other great warriors as well, who are already doomed by Me. Be not afraid. Fight, thou shall conquer thy enemies in the battle."[38]

The *Vishwarupa Darshan* (fantasy of the World Appearance) humbled Arjuna. The recorder of the dialogue, Sanjaya, says : "Having heard the utterance of Keshava (Sri Krishna) Kiritin (Arjuna), with folded hands and trembling, spoke in a faltering voice."[39] This proved to be the turning point in Arjuna's life. The sceptic, questioning, criticising-self in him was dead. Abjectly surrendering to the supernatural, he felt deeply concerned to learn which of the two paths was better, worship of Imperishable and the Unmanifested or of the Personal God.[40] Nothing would have given Sri Krishna greater pleasure than to see Arjuna asking for such clarifications because this provided him the opportunity of making his main point namely, the importance of the Vedanta in particular and theism in general. Nevertheless, the Samkhya continues to haunt both the preceptor and the disciple. Arjuna asks for light on the theories of Prakriti and Purusha.[41] It is easier at this stage for the great apostle of neo-Brahminism to present the materialist Samkhya in the form of idealist Vedanta as well as the essence of theism. Every word uttered to explain the Samkhya is in glaring distortion of Kapila's philosophy and in exaltation of the Vedanta. In the Samkhya prakriti is the cause of the universe and purusha is simply a disinterested spectator. But Sri Krishna makes the purusha as the dominating factor and prakriti subordinate to it : "He who sees the Supreme Lord abiding equally in all beings, never perishing when they perish he, verily, sees."[42] "When he sees that the manifold state of beings is centred in the One and from just that it spreads out, then he attains Brahman."[43]

The three *gunas* (modes) of the prakriti namely, goodness (*sattva*), passion (*rajas*) and dullness (*tamas*) also are interpreted in a way as to prove the truth of the Vedanta viewpoint : "He who is seated like one unconcerned, undisturbed by the *gunas* without wavering, knowing that it is only *gunas* that act...he is fit for becoming Brahman."[44]

The stage is set for dividing human race into two categories, one whose nature is godlike (*daivi*) and the other who are of demoniac spirit (*asuri*). All those who have faith in the Supreme Lord are put in the former category and others like non-conformists, rationalists, atheists and materialists are in-

cluded in the latter. Arjuna, it is no surprise, is specifically declared to be godlike (daivi) : "The divine properties are deemed to be for liberation, the demoniacal for bondage. Grieve not, thou art born with divine qualities, O Pandava."[45]

It is notable that when Sri Krishna comes to give his last and final advice to Arjuna he overrides all the philosophies—the Samkhya, the Yoga, the Vedanta, and of wisdom and action—and strongly insists on blind faith in Himself (or a Personal God) for achievement of liberation : "Renouncing mentally all works in Me, intent on Me, resorting to the Yoga of discrimination have thy thought ever on Me. Thinking on Me thou shall overcome all obstacles by My grace ; but if from egoism thou will not listen, thou shall be destroyed utterly."[46]

Arjuna calmly heard the profuse assurance as well as the dire warnings till the last but, significantly, when Sri Krishna concluded his rhetorical peroration with the words "having reflected on it (my advice) fully, then act as thou choosest."[47] Arjuna kept silent and did not, as expected by the Divine Teacher, readily accept the doctrine, causing misgivings in the mind of the Blessed Lord. Was it that the mind of the bewildered intellectual was after all still entertaining doubts and could not make the final choice ? The Blessed Lord had therefore to deliver another oration :

> "Listen thou again to My supreme word, most secret of all ; beloved art thou to Me, and steadfast of heart ; therefore will I speak for thy benefit. Merge thy mind in Me, be My devotee, sacrifice to Me, prostrate thyself before Me, then thou shall come even to Me. I pledge thee My truth, thou art dear to Me. Abandoning all duties come unto Me alone for shelter, sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sin."[48]

These tempting promises, blandishments, flattery and appeal did not go in vain. For Arjuna declared : "Destroyed is my delusion, I have gained knowledge through Thy grace, O Immutable One (Krishna), I am firm, my doubts have fled away, I will do according to Thy word."[49] One is left to wonder if this was a sincere and honest declaration.

The dialogues contained in the Bhagavad-Gita purporting to convert a pseudo-rationalist to a fully convinced, god-fearing

believer may be broadly divided into three stages. Krishna had to deal with a critic who, though a converted theist, was labouring under the influence of the Samkhya doctrines. To begin with therefore the neo-Brahminist teacher pays great attention to logical and rational argumentation in order to create a receptive mood in the pupil. Sri Krishna's appeal is more to intellect than to emotion or sentiment. His style is simple and direct. The discussion is worthy of two intellectuals. The Samkhya-Yoga philosophy was still popular among the people. Therefore, Sri Krishna nowhere opposes it and, indeed, expresses agreement with it advising Arjuna to become a Yogi. Only the Samkhya doctrines are rather timidly presented as if they are no different from the Vedanta.

In the second stage of discussion finding the pupil to be somewhat inclined to understand the teachers' viewpoint, Sri Krishna becomes more analytical and touches on topics of metaphysics, scriptural ordinances and dharma. He describes various theories about Reality and is tolerant of those who disagree with him and is good to all. Here are advanced the Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta theories with seeming impartiality and scholastic profundity. The appeal is more or less to logic and reason ; the style continues to be unsophisticated and direct.

Entering into the third and the final stage, Sri Krishna appears in his true colour as the irrepressible and uncompromising spokesman of religion and sacerdotalism. He is no longer subject to cause and effect theory. Logic and reason do not perturb him. He is aware of the fact that Arjuna's mind has been prepared to receive unquestioningly dogmas and tenets of neo-Brahminism. Therefore, he straightway proclaims the doctrines and peremptorily commands Arjuna to accept them on faith or perish. Every statement bears the stamp of sentiment, rhetoric, eloquence and forcible diction. Coherence and consistency are subordinated to indoctrination of the main principles advanced in support of the Vedanta or the theistic philosophy. The hearer or the reader is carried away smoothly along with the current of lucid, sublime and emotional religious discourse. There is no room for argument in this. Conscious of having successfully imposed himself on Arjuna, or for that

matter every student of the sacred poem, the author of the Gita can afford to be assertive, unaccommodating and uncompromising ; he relies on demands of faith and loyalty to the scriptures. In the words of G.S. Khair : "He expects them (the students of the Gita) to believe in his teachings implicitly and faithfully. He tries to achieve conviction, not with argument but with the combined weapons of faith, mysticism, divinity, supernatural powers, terror, admiration, superhuman forms, illusion and an overpowering frightful vision. He is a mastermind and knows thoroughly well the psychology of the common man who is his main audience. Those who believe in him will attain divine proximity, those who will not will go to perdition."[50]

While nearly two-thirds of the Gita is devoted to the third stage of the discussion the first two stages are dealt with in barely one-third of the poem.

It may be noted that in the discussions at the different stages not only the tone of Sri Krishna's language changes from argumentative and persuasive to assertive and dogmatic even the way in which the two characters address each other undergoes significant change. Khair has taken sufficient pains to show this. At the first stage Sri Krishna and Arjuna speak on equal terms as friends and comrades. While Arjuna addresses Sri Krishna by his proper name like Keshava, Govinda, Madhava, Janardana etc., in turn Sri Krishna addresses the Pandava Prince in a similar manner as Dhananjaya, Partha, Parantapa, Pandava etc. But later on they become unequal, when Sri Krishna assumes the divine posture he is addressed by Arjuna as *Adideva*, *Jagatnivasa*, *Parmeshwara*, *Mahayogeshwara*, *Devadeva*, *Jagatpati* etc. In turn, Sri Krishna calls him by such names as *Kurupravira*, *Kurusreshta*, *Dehabratamvara* etc.

Again, in the beginning Sri Krishna refers to God mostly in third person as someone different from himself. The words used for Him are like *tat* (that), *sa* (he), *yat* (who), *yen* (by whom) or as Brahman, Purusha, Parmatman, Kshatrin etc. But in the later stages Sri Krishna refers to himself as Supreme Being and Indestructible, Immutable or Imperishable Soul.[51]

The author of the Gita was conscious that though the discussions held between Sri Krishna and Arjuna had the

specific purpose of removing the latter's doubts, the poem was composed for the people of India who were as much frustrated and confused as the Pandava Prince, after the defeat of the Buddhist Revolution. Parts of the poem where dialogues are held on high intellectual plain are particularly meant for the educated sections whom the author calls *vipashita*, *kaviya*, *pandita*, *buddhiman*, *muni*, *yati*, *jitatman*, *rishi* and *yogi*. But when the discussion comes down to lower levels of religion and Personal God the addresses are ordinary people-like *jana*, *devvrata*, *pitrivrate*, *arta*, *jignasu*, *striya*, *shudra*, *papkritatma*. "The philosopher", observes Khair, "wanted to carry his message to every section, from top to bottom, of contemporary society."[52]

13

Synthesising Diverse Concepts

IN pursuance of the Upanishadic saying *eko sat viprah bahuda vadante* (That which exists is one ; sages call it by various names), the author of the Gita has taken pains to synthesise the different doctrines which were prevalent in the Indian society of his time in order to show that basically they do not contradict each other. Traditionally, the poem is considered to be the essence of the Upanishadic doctrines. In the introduction (*dhyanam*) to the Gita it is stated: "All the Upanishads are cows, the milker is Krishna, (the cowherd boy), Partha (Arjuna) is the calf ; men of purified intellect are the drinkers, milk is the supreme nectar of the Gita."[1]

The Hindu writers generally are, however, of the opinion that the Gita has successfully produced a comprehensive synthesis of all the systems which had been developed in the country since the Vedic times.

Even a critic like D.D. Kosambi, asserting that synthesisation is "in the Indian character", remarks :

> "A similar attitude is reflected in the philosophy of the Gita. No violence is done to any preceding doctrine except Vedic *yajna*. The essential is taken from each by a remarkably keen mind capable of deep and sympathetic study ; all are fitted together with consummate skill and literary ability, and cemented by *bhakti* without developing their contradictions."[2]

Among the ancient Indian schools of thought recognised by scholars, six are wholly or partially idealistic and three completely atheistic. Out of the former Nyaya and Vaisheshaka had faded out and their basic theories absorbed by other systems. Following the practice of the Brahmins to ignore the atheistic system or at least not to refer them by name, the Gita deals only with the idealistic systems and endeavours to synthesise them though it was found difficult even while doing so to altogether ignore the rationalist-materialist doctrines. But there can be no doubt that besides the Upanishads the other systems discussed by the author are the Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta. Dr. Radhakrishnan says :

> "The different elements which at the period of the composition of the Gita, were competing with each other within the Hindu system, are brought together and integrated into a comprehensive synthesis, free and large, subtle and profound. The teacher refines and reconciles the different currents of thoughts, the Vedic cult of sacrifice, the Upanishadic teachings of transcendent Brahman, the Bhagavata theism and tender piety, the Samkhya dualism and the Yoga meditation. He draws all these living elements of Hindu life and thought into an organic unity. He adopts the method not of denial but of penetration and shows how these different lines of thought converge towards the same end."[3]

What is the nature of the integration and synthesis which is claimed to have been brought about by the author of the Gita? Has he been able to evolve an eclectic philosophy by adopting positive and enduring elements from the various schools which he has described? There is no evidence of this. For what the author has done is to lay down the fundamental principles of the different philosophies as he understood them (or as he liked to present them) and then hold them as the right means to salvation. Each system is praised in turn while under consideration in surprising disregard of the fact that such statements are bound to contradict each other. "It is a medley of beliefs", writes Hopkins, "as to the relation between spirit and matter, and other secondary matters ; it is uncertain in its tone in regard to compartaive efficacy of action and inaction and in regard to practical man's means of salvation."[4] But D.P. Hill disagrees with Hopkins, and believes that "the poem is

less a medley than reconciliation of beliefs."[5] His disagreement however loses force when he adds : "The poet is determined to appease the orthodox ; the Veda and its devas, the Upanishads with the Vedantic theory of Brahman-Atman, the conceptions of *purusha* and *ishvara*, Samkhya knowledge and Yoga practice, none of these is neglected ; liberation knowledge is won by work, by knowledge, by devotion-by all these three in due proportion, and over all there broods the grace of God that stirs and meets the love of man."[6] Thus the failure of the author to synthesise is admitted and his passion to impose unadulterated theism on all the systems is underlined. Nor does Hill establish the talent or integrity of the author of the Gita when he observes : "If Krishna at one time seems to exalt the "man of knowledge", and at another the "votary", he is but following the Indian customs of glorifying beyond all measure that one whose turn it is for praise."[7]

While shedding light on different schools of thought the Gita describes three paths which lead to liberation from *samsara* (cycle of rebirths). They are known as *Jnana Marga* (Path of Knowledge), *Karma Marga* (Path of Action or Work) and *Bhakti Marga* (Path of Devotion). All the three are considered to be equally efficacious. Sri Krishna tells Arjuna ; "However men approach Me, even so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine, O Partha."[8]

Again, while elaborating prakriti and purusha of the Samkhya, Sri Krishna says : "Some by meditation behold the Self in the Self by the Self ; others by the Samkhya-Yoga and others by the Yoga of Action. Others also, ignorant of this, having heard of it from others, worship, and these also cross beyond death, adhering to what they had heard."[9]

These pronouncements are taken as proof of the extreme tolerance of the Gita creed and the satisfactory synthesisation of all the systems. But let us examine the sacred poem a bit closely to see if this is so.

Upholding the effectiveness of knowledge and wisdom Sri Krishna says ; "Knowledge-sacrifice is superior to wealth-sacrifice ; all karma culminates in knowledge."[10] "There is verily no purifier in the world like knowledge." He who is perfected in

Yoga finds it in the self in due season."[11] "As the burning fire reduced fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so death the fire of knowledge reduce all action to ashes."[12] "The man who is full of faith obtaineth knowledge, and he also who hath mastery over his senses, and, having obtained knowledge, he goeth swiftly to the Supreme Peace."[13] "Even if you be the most sinful of sinners yet you can cross all sin by the raft of knowledge."[14]

Earlier Sri Krishna had told Arjuna: "The man who rejoiceth in the self, with the self is satisfied, and is content in the self, for him verily there is nothing to do. For him there is no interest in things done in this world, nor any in things not done nor does any object of his depend on anything."[15]

Such categorical statements may make the reader think that Sri Krishna has given his final verdict in favour of knowledge as the path of freedom. But that is not so.

Almost in the same breath in which Shri Krishna extols knowledge, he lavishes fulsome praise on action: "Janaka and others indeed attained to perfection by action; then having an eye to the welfare of the world also, thou shouldest perform action."[16] He, however, attaches a condition of non-attachment to action: "Therefore without attachment, constantly perform action which is duty, for by performing action without attachment, man verily reacheth the Supreme."[17]

To justify this stand of making performance of action as incumbent and necessary, Sri Krishna adds: "Whatsoever a great man does, the same is done by others as well. Whatever standard he sets, the world follows. There is not for Me any work in the three worlds which has to be done nor anything to be obtained, yet I am engaged in work. For, as ever I did not engage in work unwearied, men in every way will follow My path. If I should cease to work, these worlds would fall in ruin and I should be the creator of disordered life and destroy these people."[18]

If this is so, one is provoked to ask why did not Sri Krishna qualify his praise of knowledge by an appropriate rider. Indeed, Arjuna points this out demanding clear preference for one or the other.[19] Confronted with a direct question which needs unequivocal reply, Shri Krishna admits that "Yoga by action

is better than renunciation of action (knowledge)", but to maintain the spirit of synthesisation, promptly adds: "Children not sages, speak of the Samkhya (renunciation by knowledge) and the Yoga (practice of works) as different. He who applies himself well to one, gets the fruit of both. The status which is obtained by Samkhyas (men of knowledge) is also reached by the yogins (men of action). He who sees that the ways of renunciation, knowledge and of action are one he (truly) sees."[19]

Passing on to the path of devotion, Sri Krishna jettisons the two paths (of knowledge and action) and recommends it as the best and the only means to liberation : "Those who fixing their minds on Me worship Me, ever earnest and possessed of supreme faith, them do I consider most perfect in Yoga."[20] Those verily who, renouncing all actions in Me and intent on Me, worship meditating on Me, with whole-hearted Yoga, those I speedily lift up from the ocean of death and existence, O Partha, their minds being fixed on Me."[21]

Pointing out that the difficulty of those who worship the abstract and unmanifested is greater because embodied men can not easily reach Him. Sri Krishna commends the worship of manifested personal God and says ; "Place thy mind in Me, into Me let thy Reason enter, then without doubt thou shalt abide in Me hereafter."[22]

Sri Krishna calls this Bhakti Yoga as the life-giving wisdom stressing that those who are endued with it are surpassingly dear to Him.[23]

In thus dealing with the three paths of liberation the author of the Gita has neither integrated them nor produced any synthesis. He has no doubt strongly praised each in its turn but has failed even to dovetail them. The impression left on the mind of a sober student that the author of Gita more interested in conversion of intelligent people with rational minds to theism than in producing a synthesis of diverse concepts, prepares the reader for meekly surrendering before the unseen Supreme Power.

Nor is the author's dealing with the Samkhya and other philosophies in any way objective. Starting with the aim of

attempting a synthesis of incompatible concepts, the Blessed Lord makes the catholic declaration: "By meditation some perceive the self in the self by the self (Vedanta); others by the path of knowledge (Samkhya), and still others by the path of works (Yoga). Yet others ignorant of this (the three paths) hearing from others worship (Mimamsa), and they too cross beyond death by their devotion to what they have heard."

Then jumping from one topic to another and without being able to make a point or evolve a formula containing the positive and everlasting elements in the ancient Indian philosophies the author of the sacred poem lands himself into innumerable contradictions and inconsistencies. Either synthesisation was an impossible task or a real synthesis would have inevitably clashed with the objectives of neo-Brahminism which Sri Krishna had set before himself to achieve; therefore, the author of the Gita defined the ancient philosophies as suited his purpose of establishing the excellence of pet Vedanta. Whether it be the Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa or any other *darshana*, he has presented their fundamental theories in a way as to support his thesis of personal God being supreme and all that exists in the world conditioned in accordance with His will. The distortion has taken place mostly in case of the Samkhya.

That the Samkhya with its conception of the plurality of *purushas* is opposed to the doctrine of non-duality of self taught by the Vedanta is clear from the consistent refutation by the writings of Brahmin philosophers who preceded the author of the Gita. Even Badrayana, as we know, considered the Samkhya to be the most powerful opponent of the Vedas. But Sri Krishna cleverly planned to undermine the Samkhya by owning and distorting it. In the thirteenth canto of the poem, the Samkhya doctrines are described in some detail. Whether Kapila introduced purushas (conscious spirit) in his systems besides prakriti (nature) or it was done by his successors, it is certain that in addition to the plurality of purushas his system lays emphasis on the view that purusha is merely a disinterested spectator and prakriti is the source of the universe. Sri Krishna admits that "prakriti and purusha

are both without beginning" and also that "modifications and *gunas* (qualities) are born of prakriti." Explaining the doctrine further the Blessed Lord states : "He who seeth that matter verily performeth all actions, and that self is actionless, he seeth."[24] This is the core of the Samkhya.

But then to bring the Samkhya into line with the Vedanta Sri Krishna gradually gives the upperhand to the spirit (purusha) which is unwarranted in Kapila's system. Shri Krishna starts doing so with these words ; "Matter is called the cause of the generation of causes and effects, spirit is called the cause of the enjoyment of pleasure and pain."[25]

Next, the plurality of soul is thrown overboard ; "Seated equally in all beings, the Supreme Lord, unperishing within the perishing—he who thus seeth, he seeth."[26] "Seeing indeed everywhere the same Lord, equally dwelling, he doth not destroy the self and thus treads the highest path."[27]

The reference to the destruction of self may be to refute the criticism of the materialists who held that the concept of purusha was unnecessary in the Samkhya system. The author of the Gita pretends to be in agreement with the Samkhya doctrine but by the methods of *suggestio falsi* draws conclusions opposed to those held by the Samkhya teachers. Finally, identifying the Samkhya with the Vedanata, Sri Krishna says; "When he preceiveth the diversified existence of beings as rooted in One, and spreading forth from It then he reacheth the Eternal."[28]

In the fifteenth canto, Sri Krishna goes further and preaches undisguised Vedanta though still using the terminology of the Samkhya. Purusha ceases to be an unconcerned spectator and becomes the Eternal, Unchanging, Supreme Self which pervades the universe and sustains it ; all non-purusha things are considered destructible and the prakriti is no more beginningless and endless. The new theory is nothing but pantheism of the Vedanta in its purest form. Sri Krishna says : "There are two energies (pursushas) in this world—the destructible and the indestructible ; the destructible is all beings, the unchanging is called the indestructible. The highest energy (purusha) is verily Another declared as Supreme Self, he who pervading

all, sustaineth the three worlds, the Indestructible Lord."[29]

From the highly intellectual philosophy of the Samkhya the author of the Gita comes down to ritualistic system of Mimamsa. The old tradition of sacrifice, (*yajna*) and Vedic forms of worship had to be recognised ; various gods, ancient and contemporaneous, and their worship, worship of ancestors, demigods, ghosts, devils, animals natural elements, trees etc., are revived. Some cantos of the poem especially VI, VII, and X depict religious conditions in India as they prevailed in post-Buddhist period. The great synthesiser does not reject the unhealthy trends in social life but accepts them as a necessary evil ; "They whose wisdom hath been rent away by desires go forth to other gods observing various rites, constrained by their own natures. Whatever form any devotee with faith wishes to worship, I make that faith of his steady. He, endowed with that faith, seeketh the worship of such a one, and from him he obtaineth his desires, the benefits being decreed by Me, alone."

Dr. Radhakrishnan who asserts that the Gita has integrated diverse Indian philosophies, appreciates the retention of primitive practices. Admitting that "many features of modern Hinduism are derived from very primitive sources", the savant remarks : "Ever since the dawn of reflection the dream of unity has hovered over the scene and haunted the imagination of the leaders...Though Islam and Christianity by their militant attitude occasionally provoked similar developments in Hinduism, its prevailing note continues to be of understanding and acceptance of the bona fides of other faiths."[29]

But Gita Doctrine is neither integration of different philosophies nor synthesisation of diverse faiths. It only creates a bizzare amalgam which it has become in the eyes of unbiased students. "When the Gita is read as a unified whole these diverse views have to be artificially reconciled", observes Khair.[30]

Rather than having discovered a synthesis of different philosophies as claimed by Hindu writers, the Gita is, at best, a mosaic of various primitive and developed religious concepts. This is no merit. "Preservation or acceptance of primitive con-

cepts and notions", says Laxman Shastri Joshi, "is not a mark of tolerance or generosity, it is rather a sign of weakness. Since the primitive notions lead to a general decay and demoralisation, they come to be replaced by the more developed ones. It is therefore an illusion to go on believing that they too contain, an element of truth. It becomes, on the contrary, in the course of evolution a duty to destroy them...When Buddhism, Islam and Christianity rushed forth to destroy the earlier primitive religions, they shattered a number of such illusions, and cleared the human mind of them. Hinduism on the other hand tried to preserve them. It was neither noble nor heroic, but it was weak and unable to do what it ought to have done."[31]

Just as by distortion, misrepresentation and by laying undue emphasis on particular points the author of the Gita tries to show the other orthodox systems as not much different from the Vedanta, he has also taken some features of the heterodox systems without naming them or acknowledging the source, to strengthen his own stand. Concepts have been stolen from Buddhism, Jainism and even Charvak's Lokayata and placed in suitable contexts to serve the aim of the Vedanta or the cult of theism. This must have been done in view of the popularity of such heretic ideas among large sections of the people after the defeat of the Great Revolution. As pointed out by Kosambi the verses from 55 to 72 in the second canto would not have occurred to the author without a knowledge of Buddhism. *Nirvana* is a purely Buddhist ideal state of escape from the effect of karma and the Gita refers to it in verse 72 of the second canto and again in verse 25 of the fifth canto only taking care to add that it means absorption of individual self in the Universal Self. As Kosambi remarks "we may similarly trace other unlabelled schools of thought" in the Gita.[32]

In reply to Arjuna's query about the man whose spirit is steadfast and mind stable, Sri Krishna describes qualities which can easily be traced to the heterodox doctrines. Says the Blessed Lord : "He whose mind is untroubled in the midst of sorrows and is free from eager desire amid pleasures, he from whom passion, fear and rage have passed away, he is called a

sthita prajna (a sage of settled intelligence).[33] Again : "Man, musing on the objects of sense, conceiveth an attachment to these ; from attachment ariseth desire, from desire anger cometh forth. From anger proceedeth delusion, from delusion confused memory, from confused memory destruction of Reason ; from destruction of Reason he perishes. But the disciplined self moving among sense objects with senses free from attraction, and repulsion ; he attaineth peace. In that peace the extinction of all pain ariseth for him for, of him whose heart is peaceful, the Reason soon attaineth equilibrium[3]

It will be seen that the entire emphasis for attainment of peace is on Reason and there is no stress on reliance on Universal Self or Supreme Being : they are not even mentioned. This was the trail blazed by the ancient rationalist philosophers and totally at variance with the cult of the personal God or the Vedanta taught by the Gita.

Discussing the Samkhya-Yoga in forth canto, Sri Krishna observes : "He who that renounced actions by Yoga, who hath cloven asunder doubt by knowledge who is ruled by the self, actions do not bind him. Therefore, with the sword of knowledge cleaving asunder this ignorance-born doubt dwelling in the heart be established in Yoga."[34]

With such declarations one tends to think that the author of the sacred poem has dispensed with the need of a Personal God or any Supreme Being. A man can achieve liberation through self-effort and with the help of Reason. Again, "The man who rejoiceth in the self, with the self is satisfied, and is content in the self for him verily there is nothing to do (not even to depend upon God). For him there is no interest in things done in this world, nor any things not done, nor doth any object of his depend on any being."[35]

Equally incompatible with the God-oriented outlook is the advice for self-improvement given by Sri Krishna to Arjuna which is wholly in accord with the doctrines of the rationalists : "Let a man raise himself by his own self ; let him not debase himself. For he is himself his friend, his foe. To him who has conquered his (base) self by the (divine) self his own self is the friend ; but to him who has not subdued the

self his own self acts as the foe."[36]

To fully enjoy life but with moderation and restraint was one of the cardinal principles of Charvaka's philosophy. Some Lokayata teachers preached that the deliverance could be attained by adopting the middle path and harmony in life. The Buddhist philosophers incorporated this view in their code of conduct. The Gita is replete with verses alluding to these doctrines, of course, without mentioning their source ; "Even here on earth everything is overcome by those whose, mind remains balanced."[37] "He who is happy within, who rejoiceth within, who is illuminated within, that Yogi becoming eternal goeth to the Peace of the Eternal."[38]

Again the Gita proclaims : "That in which he findeth the supreme delight which the Reason can grasp beyond the senses, wherein established he moveth not from the Reality which having obtained, he thinketh there is no greater gain beyond, it ; wherein established, he is not shaken even by heavy sorrow. They should be known by the name of Yoga, this disconnection from the union with pain."

About moderation Sri Krishna declares ; "Verily, Yoga is not for him who eateth too much nor who abstaineth to excess, nor who is too much addicated to sleep, nor even to wakefulness, O Arjuna : Yoga killeth out all pain for him who is regulated in eating and amusement, regulated in performing actions, regulated in sleeping and waking."[39]

This way of life with its rules and regulations drawn from ancient Indian Rationalist philosophy overrides asceticism, particularly *tapas* (self-torture), which is extolled by the author as *daivi sampad* (divine possession) at different places in the poem.

Woven around the faith in Deity, the ideas of unity, equality, equipoise, selfiessness, equity, and fellow-feeling etc., etc., are taken from the teachings, of the rationalists and materialists : "The self, harmonised by Yoga, seeth the self abiding in all beings and the all beings in the self; everywhere he seeth the same." "He who, through the likeness of the self, O Arjuna,seeth equality in every thing whether pleasant or painful he is considered as a perfect yogin."[40] "He from whom the world

doth not shrink away who doth not shrink away from the world, freed from the anxieties of joy, anger and fear, he is dear to Me.[41] "Alike to foe and friend, and also in fame and ignomity, alike in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, destitute of attachment. Taking equally praise and reproach, silent, wholly content with what cometh, homeless, firm in mind, full of devotion (for a noble cause) that man is dear to me."[42]

Having taken the concept of *ananda* (happiness) from Charvakas, *hetu* (causal theory) from Rationalist, *nirvana* from Buddhists, and *kaivalya* from Jainas, the author of the Gita uses them for the glorification of his favourite philosophy of the Vedanta.

And, finally, mention may be made of the institution of *chaturvarnya* (four-caste system) in Indian society which is the crassest contradiction of the concept of equality of men or human brotherhood. Yet the author of the Gita upholds both in the sacred poem. "The four castes were emanated from me" passionately asserts Sri Krishna, "and know me to be the author of them."[43] Describing in detail the qualities, work and even food of the different castes he leaves little doubt in the mind of the reader that the Brahmins are superior and the lower castes inferior in varying degrees ; he underlines that the distinction is "nature-born". When thereafter the Blessed Lord envisages also the unity of human race by saying that "I am the same in all beings, there is none hateful to Me nor dear",[44] or that "the man who sees the likeness of himself everywhere",[45] one is left puzzling which of the two inconsistent verdict is to be taken as the real teaching of the divine lore.

The borrowed notions of cosmopolitanism, fellow-feeling, harmony, moderation and equilibrium could not make neo-Brahminism revolutionary, liberal or generous. We shall have to consider how far the Gita is tolerant to those who differ from the tenets finally adopted by it. But here it will suffice to say that the acceptance of all viewpoints, in however a mutilated form, is not the strength of the Gita ; it is rather a symptom of imbecility and incurable weakness of neo-Brahminism ; "The tendency to surrender to any deity or prophet shows that weakness", writes Joshi referring to Hinduism in

general. "When faith blinds vision, illusions throttle reason (and) emotions are entangled with delusive ideals of other-worldly blessings, the mind naturally becomes weak and prone to surrender to anyone."[46]

It is this object surrender what the contemporary Hindu philosophers praise as the spirit of integration and synthesisation in the Gita.

14

Contradictions and Inconsistencies

IN trying to achieve the impossible objective of reconciling the irreconcilable doctrines of the Samkhya and the Vedanta, the author of the Gita landed himself in a position where he has to be repetitive, contradictory, incoherent and inconsistent. Any close examination of the poem reveals the fact that there is hardly any single theory which has been upheld throughout. The statements made in the earlier parts of the scripture are rejected subsequently and the principles and practices renounced in the beginning are commended and even ordained later on. "For a logical, related, consistent, systematic and coherent interpretation, the poem presents a number of difficulties", feels G.S. Khair, a devoted scholar of the Gita. "The whole poem has the outward appearance of unity but discloses contradictions on critical scrutiny. Very few indeed might be able to interpret the Gita as a whole in a satisfactory way."[1]

The author of Gita was confronted with a Himalayan problem. He had taken upon himself the task of undermining and, if possible, shattering the element of rationalist thought in the people and of replacing it by the mysticism of the Vedanta and the blind belief in a Personal God. Failing to synthesize the diverse concepts of ancient Indian philosophies, he saw no alternative but to indulge in ambiguous, equivocal and contradictory statements. Frequently when

faced with an intractable problem he jumps from one topic to another.

For instance, in the second canto, while expatiating on the Samkhya and the Vedanta, he abruptly starts to dwell on politics with its gains and losses for Arjuna. The poem abounds in such digressions.

There are repetitions of the same matter ; almost the same ideas and arguments are stated over and over again. Obviously this is done to produce a deeper impression on the mind of the reader. According to Khair who has tabulated the topics brought under consideration, "out of 35 most important subjects, a large number is repeated twice or thrice, but there are about eight subjects which are repeated five or six times."[2]

Sri Krishna avoids giving replies to inconvenient questions asked by Arjuna. "The high god repeatedly emphasises". writes Kosambi, "the great virtue of non-killing (ahimsa), yet the entire discourse is an incentive to war."[3] Again, "the pure life, non-violence, absence of greed and of self-seeking are extolled. When puzzled Arjuna naturally asks ; "Why then do you ask me to kill ?" the god neatly glides away to the next point of his exposition, leaving the direct question unanswered."[4]

Throughout the poem stress has been laid on non-possession (*aparigraha)* and non-attachment (*anaskti*) to worldly objects. But at least twice Sri Krishna endeavours to tempt the Pandava Prince to fight in order to regain kingdom, riches and power ; "Slain, thou will obtain heaven, victorious thou will enjoy the earth, therefore stand up, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), resolute to fight."[5] Further on again he exhorts : "Therefore stand up : win for thyself renown, conquer thy foes, enjoy the wealth-filled realm. By Me they (Kaurava heroes) are already overcome. Be thou the outward cause, O left-handed one (Arjuna)."[6]

Conscious that a large segment of his readership consists of sceptics not yet free from the influence of the Samkhya doctrines, the author, to make their minds more receptive, underrates the Vedas and other orthodox religious texts : "All the Vedas are useful to an enlightened Brahmana as is a tank

in a place covered all over with water."[7] When the mind bewildered by the scriptures shall stand unmovable, fixed in contemplation then shalt thou attain upto Yoga."[8]

But at the later stages of the dialogue when Sri Krishna feels assured that Arjuna's criticism has lost its sting and the disciple has mellowed down, the master comes out with praises for the scriptures, and indeed indentifies himself with the Vedas : "I, the father of this universe, the mother, the supporter, the grandsire, the holy one to be known, the World of Power, and also the *Rig*, *Sam* and *Yajur* (Vedas),[9] Describing the manifestations of God on the earth, Sri Krishna proclaims that "I am *Sam Veda*."[10] About the importance of the *shastras* (scriptures) he warns : "He, who, having cast aside the ordinances of the *shastras* follows the promptings of desire attaineth not to perfection, nor happiness, nor the highest goal. Therefore, let the scriptures be thy authority in determining what ought to be done. Knowing what hath been declared by the ordinances of the scriptures, thou oughtest to work in this world."[11] Thus in the opinion of the Blessed Lord only the practices as prescribed by the religious texts can be accepteable, not others.

Such men as perform severe austerities (*tapas*) which are *not enjoined* by the Brahminical *shastras* are declared as *asuri* (demoniacal) in their resolve.[12] In this way the authority of the Vedas and other orthodox religious texts is maintained as supreme and unchallengeable.

While elaborating the Samkhya philosophy in the beginning of the dialogue, Sri Krishna appreciates the independent role of the individual and gives the impression that man is the maker of his destiny : "Let a man lift himself ; let him not degrade himself ; for self alone is the friend of the self and the self alone is the enemy of the self. For him who has conquered his self by the self his self is a friend but for him who has not possessed his self, his very self will act in enmity, like an enemy."[13] Laying further emphasis on the same idea he says : "The man who rejoices in the self and with the self is satisfied, is content in the self, for him verily there is nothing to do. For him there is no interest in things done in this world, nor

any in things not done ; *nor doth any object of his depend* on any being."[14]

Indicating the method by which one should face difficulties in achieving success in Yoga practices, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna : "Without doubt, O mighty armed, the mind is hard to curb, but it may be curbed by constant practice and by dispassion."[15]

Dwelling again on the efforts of the individual to attain liberation, Sri Krishna says : "The gateway of the hell leading to the ruin of the soul is three fold—lust, anger and greed. Therefore these three one should abandon. The man who is released from these gates of darkness does what is good for his soul and then reaches the highest state."[16]

But the independence of the individual and his efforts to improve his lot and rise to highest moral and spiritual plane are set at naught by Sri Krishna while describing the functioning of the *prakriti* or the inscrutable power of the Supreme God : "All actions are wrought by the qualities of nature only. The (individual) self deluded by egoism, thinketh "I am the doer."[1] A little later he says : "Even the man of knowledge behaves in conformity with his *swabhava* (own nature), beings follow nature what shall restraint avail ?"[18]

In the eleventh canto while explaining the vision of the *Vishwarupa* (Universal Appearance) Sri Krishna tells Arjuna that the warriors arrayed on both sides of the battle field at Kurukshetra will not escape death as they had already been doomed by Time and he, Arjuna, would be only the outer cause of the destruction (that is will do it formally).[19]

When Sri Krishna unfolds and expands the core of his philosophy, the individual is relegated to a helpless and pathetic position. Not only his initiative and independence cease to have any value, even the *prakriti* becomes functionless. God is all in all and it is His Will and idiosyncrasy which prevail ; man can and should only meekly submit and surrender : "The Lord dwelleth in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, by His illusive powers causing all beings to revolve as though mounted on a potter's wheel." "Flee unto Him

for shelter with all thy being, O Bharata ; by His grace thou shall obtain supreme peace, the everlasting dwelling place."[20]

Instead of making a man wise the Gita thus causes deep confusion ; If Time has fore-ordained the destiny of every one or indwelling God moves helpless man like a machine, how is he capable of any initiative or expected to improve himself or succeed in facing the difficulties or getting released from the forces of darkness ? It should be the work of God who directs man to function like an automaton to put him on the right path. Man's moral responsibility is meaningless and ceases to have any reality.

Sri Krishna is nowhere more inconsistent than in defining Reason and its place in human life. The regard for the Samkhya, however superficial and hypocritical, compel him to start with paying unreserved tributes to it : "The determinate Reason is but one-pointed, O joy of the Kurus (Arjuna): many branched and endless are the thoughts of the irresolute."[21] There are fulsome praises for wisdom (knowledge) and Reason throughout the first part of the discourse. "All actions, in their entirety, O Partha, culminate in wisdom."[22] "Even if thou art the most sinful of all sinners yet shalt thou cross over all sin by raft of wisdom."[23] "Verily there is no purifier in this world like wisdom ; he that is perfected in Yoga finds it in the self in due season."[24] "As the burning fire reduces fuel to ashes, O Arjuna, so doth the fire of wisdom reduce all actions to ashes."[25] "Far lower than the Yoga of discrimination is action ; O Dhananjaya ; take thou refuge in the Pure Reason.[6] "United to the Pure Reason one abandoneth here both good and evil deeds."[27] "From destruction of Reason one perishes."[28] "There is no Pure Reason for the non-harmonised."[29]

Gradually both Reason and Knowledge are demoted to a subordinate place and God elevated above them. "It is said that the senses are great, greater than the senses is the mind, greater than the mind is the Reason, but what is greater than the Reason is He."[30] "Better indeed is wisdom than constant practice", than wisdom meditation is better, than meditation renunciation of the fruit of action, on renunciation follows peace.[31]

And, therefore, Reason is no longer the power for attaining happiness, liberation or peace ; it has to serve as an instrument for reaching the Supreme God : "Thus understanding Him as greater than the Reason restraining thyself by the Self, O mighty armed (Arjuna), slay thou the enemy in the form of desire, difficult to overcome."[32]

At the final stage when Sri Krishna preaches the cult of the Personal God, Reason is completely eclipsed and it has no place whatsoever in the individual's life : "Abandoning all dharmas (duties) come unto me alone for shelter ; sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins."[33]

As a matter of fact, Sri Krishna says that Reason as well as virtues, misfortune, etc., of man are nothing in themselves; they come from God and are bestowed by Divine Will : "Reason, wisdom, non-illusion, forgiveness, truth, self-restraint, calmness pleasure, pain, existence, non-existence, fear and also courage, harmlessness, equanimity, content, austerity, almsgiving, fame and obloquy are the various characteristics of beings issuing from Me."[34]

In course of the discourse, as we saw before, Sri Krishna has been indecisive about the superior merit of the Samkhya or Yoga, even as he has defined them. By alternately giving preference to one or other, he causes confusion which constrains Arjuna to point out : "You praise renunciation of action (Samkhya) and then also Yoga. Of the two which one is the better, that tell me conclusively."[35]

Sri Krishna makes an attempt to harmonise the two but in doing so only betrays his own wooliness of mind : "Renunciation and Yoga by action both lead to the highest bliss ; of the two, Yoga by action is verily better than renunciation of action."[36] Thinking that by showing his preference for Yoga he might have incurred the displeasure of the Samkhya admirers, he promptly adds : "Children, not sages, speak of the Samkhya and Yoga as different ; he who is duly established in one who obtaineth the fruits of both."[37]

Then a little later in the discussion, Sri Krishna falters and cannot help again displaying his preference for Yoga : "The Yogi is greater than the ascetics ; he is thought to be greater

than even the wise: the Yogi is greater than the men of action; therefore become thou a Yogi, O Arjuna."[38]

The greatest difficulty in understanding *Gita* doctrines or the arguments of the author crops up when he interprets the same words or concepts in different senses. Such, for instance, are words *yoga, karma, buddhi, jnana, purusha,* etc.

Yoga literally means union; broadly it is taken to mean the theory of individual soul's union with the Universal Soul or of *jivatman* with *Parmatman.* But in the Gita this is not the only sense in which yoga has been used and interpreted. Dealing with the philosophy of the Samkhya-Yoga the author defines Yoga as equilibrium; "Perform action, O Dhananjaya, dwelling in union with the divine renouncing attachment and balanced evenly in success and failure; equilibrium is called Yoga."[39]

This interpretation is not maintained throughout the dialogue. New meanings and connotations are introduced wholly incompatiable with this sense of yoga. In the sixth canto the yoga is described, as Patanjali did, as the practice of breath control in certain bodily postures: "Let the yogi constantly engage himself in yoga, remaining in a secret place by himself, with thought and self subdued, free from hope and greed. In a pure place, established on a fixed seat of his own neither very much raised nor very low, made of a cloth, black antelope skin, and *kusha* grass, one over the other; there having made the mind one-pointed with thought and the functions of the senses subdued, steady on his seat, he should practice yoga for the purification of self. Holding the body, head and neck erect, immovably steady, looking fixedly at the point of the nose, with unseeing gaze. The self serene, fearless, firm in the vow of the Brahmachari, the mind controlled, thinking of Me, harmonised, let him sit aspiring for Me."[40]

Another reference to this Yoga is made in the eighth canto: "All the gates of the body restrained, the mind confined within the heart; one's life force fixed in the head, established in concentration by yoga."[41]

The only difference between Patanjali yoga and Gita yoga is that while the former did not make it incumbent for the yogi to have faith in the Supreme Being, the author of Gita

makes the ultimate aim of yoga practices to be union with God.

Yoga is described at other places as mysterious divine power : "Behold My sovereign yoga ; the support of beings yet not rooted in beings. Myself their efficient cause."[42] "He who knows in essence that sovereignty and yoga of Mine, he is harmonised by unfaltering yoga ; there is no doubt thereof."[43] Again referring to *Vishwarupa* Sri Krishna says "By My grace, through My divine power (yoga) O Arjuna, was shown to thee this Supreme form, luminous, universal, infinite and Primal which none but thee has seen before."[44]

Yoga also means devotion : "Those verily who, renouncing all action in Me and intent on Me, worship meditating on Me, with whole-hearted yoga."[45]

Yoga is called renunciation : "whatever thou doest, whatever thou eatest, whatever thou offerest, whatever thou givest, whatever thou doest of austerity, O Kaunteya, do them as an offering to Me. Thus shalt thou be liberated from the bonds of action, yielding good and evil fruits, thyself harmonised by the yoga of renunciation, thou shalt come unto Me when free."[46]

Yoga is also defined as discrimination : "To these, ever harmonious worshipping love, I give the yoga of discrimination by which they come upto me."[47] At another place we are told that it is creation illusion or creative power of God : "Veiled by My creative power *(Yogamaya)* I am not revealed to all. The bewildered knows Me not, the Unborn, the Unchanging."[48] Yoga is said to be dexterity, cleverness, skill in action : "United in Pure Reason one abandoneth here both good and evil deeds : therefore cleave thou to yoga ; yoga is skill in action.[49]

And, finally, yoga becomes another name for blind faith in God : "Those who fixing their minds on Me worship Me ever earnest and possessed of supreme faith them do I consider most perfect in Yoga."[50]

Many words in Sanskrit language are capable of being used in different meanings and connotations which are not infrequently contradictory. The author of the Gita is not slow in deriving advantage from it. The words *buddhi*, *jnana*, *jiva*, etc., have been used in this way to cause perplexity.

At several places in the poem the author plays down and even derides the Vedic sacrifices. Sri Krishna advises yogis to be firm in estimating their real value and to ignore them : "The fruit of meritorious deeds, attached in Vedas, to sacrifices, to austerities and to almsgiving, the yogi passeth all those by having known this (Reality), and goeth to the supreme and ancient Seat.[51]

But in contrast to this assertion, Sri Krishna stresses the great significance of the sacrifice to human life : "Having in ancient times emanated mankind together with sacrifice, the Prajapati (Lord of emanation) said : 'By this ye shall propagate, be this to you giver of desire. With this nourish ye the gods (shinning ones) and may the gods nourish you ; thus nourishing one another ye shall reap the supreme good."[52] He goes on to say : "From food creatures become ; from rain is the production of food, rain proceedeth from sacrifice, sacrifice ariseth out of action."[53]

To bring home to the reader the greatness of the Vedanta, the author of the Gita frequently makes the statement that everything in the universe is rooted in God and that strong and weak, humble and high, bad and good are equally in Him. The pantheistic theory that nothing is outside Brahman is in cross contradiction to the theory of divine manifestations enunciated in the tenth canto where special categories of gods, sages, men, animals and trees are singled out as repositories of divine power. If Brahman is present equally everywhere why should man look upon certain specific things as His special manifestation ?

Likewise, the theories of cosmology variously stated at different places clash with each other. The author starts with the statement that beings are unmanifest (unseen, unemerged) in their origin ; they become manifest in the mid most state but again are unseen after dissolution.[54] From the unmanifested all the manifested stream forth at the coming of the day, at the coming of the night they dissolve even in that called the unmanifested."[55] "This multitude of beings, going forth repeatedly, is dissolved at the coming of night, by ordination, O Partha, it streams forth at coming of the day."[56]

Describing *prakriti*, Sri Krishna says : "Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind and reason and egoism, these are the eight-fold divison of My nature."[57] "Hidden in nature, which is mine own, I emanate again and again all this multitude of beings, helpless, by the force of Nature."[58] This is close to the original Samkhya theory which makes prakriti the creator of universe.

In the thirteenth canto, analysing the constituents of the *kshetra* (body), Sri Krishna adopts the twenty four principles of the Samkhya system : "The great (five gross) elements, individuality, Reason as also the unmanifested, the ten senses and mind and the five postures of the senses, desire and hatred, pleasure and pain, the aggregate (the organism) intelligence and steadfastness ; these in brief constitute the field along with its modifications."[59] But side by side with this the author without hesitation tries to override the Samkhya cosmology by Vedantic dogma. Prakriti is replaced by purusha. Sri Krishna says : "This is inferior (nature) ; know My other nature, the higher ; the life element (soul), O mighty armed, by which the universe is upheld. Knowing this to be the womb of all beings, I am the source of the forthgoing of the whole universe likewise the place of its dissolving."[60] Again : "But beyond this unmanifested, there is yet another unmanifested Eternal Being who does not perish even when all existences perish."[61] "My womb is the great Eternal, in that I place the germ, thence cometh, the birth of all beings, O Bharata." "In whatsoever wombs mortals are produced, O Kaunteya, the great Eternal is their womb. I their generating father."[62]

These inconsistencies in describing the genesis of the universe, have led G. S. Khair a Gita lover to observe : "The Samkhya, Vedanta and Bhakti ideas are mixed up in chapter IX 7, 8, 10, but they refuse to be integrated and cause more confusion in the mind of the readers... Commentators have tried to unify and reconcile these three theories, but the subtle difference and the diversity is clear as sunshine. To many rational interpreters, the metaphysics of the Gita is puzzling and inexplicable."[63]

The Indian rationalist thinkers particularly Charvaka and his followers, had made happiness as the highest aim of life.

The cult of neo-Brahminism was opposed to it and, as stated earlier, its votaries had introduced *tapas* (self-torture) as a great ideal. The author af the Gita has fallen between two stools by trying to stand on both. While discussing the Samkhya he is not against enjoying pleasures of life. He advises to share joy and bliss with the gods (which actually only means) to "With this (sacrifice) nourish ye the gods and may the gods nourish you. Thus nourishing one another ye shall reap the supreme good. For nourished by sacrifice, the shinning ones (gods) will bestow on you the enjoyments you desire. A thief verily is he who enjoyeth what is given by them without returning them aught."[64]

Then coming back, in the eighteenth canto, to the discussion of the prakriti with its three qualities (*gunas*) the author categorizes pleasure into *sattvika*, *rajasa* and *tamas* : "That in which one by practice rejoiceth, and which putteth an end to pain, which at first is as venom but in the end is as nectar ; that pleasure is said to be *sattvika* (pure), born of the blissful knowledge of the Self. That which form the union of the senses with their objects as first is as nectar, but in the end is like venom, that pleasure is accounted *rajas* (passionate). That pleasure which both at first and afterwards is delusive of self, arising from sleep, indolence and heedlessness, that is declared *tamas* (dark)."[65]

This certainly is not the definition of pleasure given by the materialists but the point is that the author of the Gita is not totally averse to pleasure. Though obviously somewhat perverted his definition of pleasure is not very different from that of the Charavakas whose main concern was advocacy of pain and attainment of happiness by enjoyment of life. However, the final verdict of Sri Krishna is in favour of the ideal of *tapas* (self-torture) which is antithesis of *bhoga* (pleasure). Says he : "The delights that are contact born, they are verily wombs of pain for they have beginning and ending, O Kaunteya, not in them may rejoice the wise."[66] Then enumerating his own manifestations the mighty God declares that he is the *tapas* of the *tapasvis* (ascetics) who practice self-torture[67] which betrays his hidden preference characteristics of Brahminism for pleasure-killing.

One can go on pointing out contradictions and inconsistencies in the sayings of the holy poem but let this much suffice. Finally I may, however, refer to another matter deserving attention.

There is confusion about the personality of Sri Krishna whether he is a human being or divinity. In the dialogues he talks some times as an ordinary man, a friend and an equal of Arjuna, and refers to God as some one other than the two disputants. At these places God is referred to as *Brahman*, *Uttama Purusha*, *Kshetrin*, *Parmatman* or a third person addressed as *tat*, *sa*, *yat*, *yen*, etc.

Gradually, however, he assumes the authority of the Supreme Being and with bewildering rapidity shifts his position from one to the other, from man to God. Significantly, when the discussion centres on the Samkhya philosophy which has to be carried on in a logical, reasoned and argumentative manner Sri Krishna is a man, a friend and, at the most, an elder experienced and informed teacher. But when the talk is taken to the plane of religion, Vedanta or Personal God, Sri Krishna transfigures himself into the Omniscient, Omnipresent and Omnipotent God. The words for himself then used are *Aham*, *Mam*, *Maya*, *Mat* and compounds for devotees are like *madbhakta*, *matyaji*.

"How can all these contradictions be explained ?" asks Winternitz. "Scholars are by no means unanimous on this point. Some are content to say that all these contradictions simply result from the fact that the Bhagavad-Gita is not a systematic philosophical work, but a mystical poem... On the other hand, other scholars maintain that there are limits even for mystical poetry, and that the contradiction in the Gita can better be explained by the assumption that the poem had not come down to us in its original form, but like most parts of the *Mahabharata*, has only received its present form as a result of interpolations and revisions".

Mahatma Gandhi whose unbounded admiration for the Gita is well known, could not help detecting its inconsistency in earnestly advocating war *(himsa)* and at the same time preaching non-injury *(ahimsa)* and peace as the highest goal of moral life. He was from the beginning entranced by the

last nineteen verses of the Second Chapter dealing with *sthita prajna* (man of settled mind) which "remain inscribed on the tablet of my heart". Gandhi did not like such verse of the Gita which were inconsistent with these verses he deeply appreciated. How was then he to maintain the integrity of the scripture ? "I have read many translations and many commentaries, have argued and reasoned to my hearts content" says the Mahatma, "but the impression that the first reading gave me has never been effected. Those verses are the key to the interpretation of the Gita. I would ever advise rejection of the verses that may seem to be in conflict with them". A meaningful suggestion indeed : However, lest it may sound profane to orthodox ears Gandhi added ; "But the humble student need reject nothing. He will simply say it is the limitation of my own intellect that I cannot resolve this inconsistency. I might be able to do so in the time to come."[68] How have these contradictions and inconsistencies affected the Hindu society ? Kosambi says : "This slippery opportunism characterises the whole book. Naturally it is not surprising to find so many Gita-lovers imbued therewith. Once it is admitted that material reality is gross illusion, the rest follows quite simply ; the world of "double think" is the only one that matters."[69]

15

War on Non-Believers

RELYING on the pronouncement made by Sri Krishna in the fourth canto that "however men approach Me even so do I welcome them ; for the path men take from every side in Mine" and one or two such other statements elsewhere in the poem, Hindu leaders have claimed that the *Gita* has besides synthesising all ancient systems of Indian philosophy, founded the most tolerant religion for mankind. Undoubtedly when the author of the poem asseverates that all paths lead to the same goal, there should exist no enmity between any two schools of thought however divergent they may be in their approach to human problems. With such healthy outlook all religions can co-exist with no reason for being hostile towards each other.

We have already examined the claim made on behalf of synthesisation of diverse concepts in the Gita philosophy and found it to be no more than the imposition of a particular creed preferred by Sri Krishna on all other systems which had been inherited by the Indians or were in existence at the time when the sacred poem was composed. We may now proceed to see whether the author has consistently maintained the position that all paths lead to the same goal and therefore have to be welcomed and accepted as equally true and good.

No doubt the Gita more or less refers to all the ancient systems of Indian thought, both orthodox and heterodox, but

a close scrutiny of the poem does not bear out the claim that the author desired any one of these systems, except his own, to thrive even after he has distorted and twisted them beyond recognition. Repeatedly he denounced the unorthodox systems, ridiculed them and warned their followers of destruction and perdition if they persisted in holding their peculiar views. This should not be surprising for the chief motive of the teachings of the Gita is to convert the people, intellectuals in particular, to the creed of the Vedanta or Vasudeva Krishna. Any concession to other systems would have thwarted the aim in view and retarded the progress of conversion. The slogan "all paths converging at the same point" was just to hoodwink the innumerable intellectuals who continued to be influenced by the rationalist philosophy in the age of declining Buddhism.

In addressing the opponents who follow orthodox schools other than the one preferred by him Sri Krishna uses words like *dush karman* (evil-doer), *naradhama* (low man), *huta jnana* (killed-wisdom), *alpamedha* (low-witted), *mooda* (fool), *abudhava* (unintelligent), *nashtan* (destroyed), *acheta* (mindless) *sanshayatma* (doubting-mind), etc. But the choicest epithets and invectives such as *nashtama* (lost-soul) *dambhman* (hypocrite), *madanvithah* (overwhelmed by pride), *asura* (demoniacal) and *rakshasa* (fiend) he reserves for atheists and materialists. When addressing them Sri Krishna becomes vehement, rash and even somewhat impolite in language.

Having described the philosophies of renunciation and action as he understood them, and indicating his preference for the Yoga of Action for achievement of liberation, Sri Krishna concludes :

> "Who abide ever in this teaching of Mine full of faith and free from cavilling they too are released from action, but those who carp at My teaching and act not thereon, senseless, deluded in all knowledge, *know thou these mindless ones fated to be destroyed.*"[1]

Thus only those people can entertain the hope of being saved from *samsara* (cycle of rebirths) who accept without question or criticism the doctrine of yoga of Action as pro-

pounded by Sri Krishna, others being deluded and mindless are destined to be destroyed.

In the seventh canto, Sri Krishna casually refers to the three qualities (*gunas*) of Nature (*prakriti*) saying that the world deluded by them cannot know the Imperishable God. Drawing distinction between those who repose faith in the Supreme Being and the opponents of this creed, the author says : "The divine *maya* of Mine, consisting of the modes (*gunas*), is hard to overcome. But those who take refuge in Me alone cross beyond it."[2]

What kind of people are the opponents who reject Divine Grace ? Answers Sri Krishna : "The evil-doers who are foolish, low in the human scale, whose minds are carried away by illusion and who partake the nature of demons do not seek refuge in Me."[3]

Describing the omnipresence of God in the nature and his semblance in human form (*avatara*), Sri Krishna asserts that the universe revolves because the Lord wills it so. Of course the faithful understand this. But what of the others who decline to believe in it ? Sri Krishna thunders : "The deluded despise Me, clad in human body, not knowing My higher nature as Lord of all existences. Partaking of the deceptive nature of fiends and demons, their aspirations are vain, their actions vain and their knowledge vain and they are devoid of judgement."[4]

When doubts begin to arise in the minds of people about irrational dogmas and demoralising tenets of time-honoured systems, it is the first step towards achievement of knowledge and dawn of intellectual revolution. Therefore Brahman philosophers always held *sanshayatma* (doubting mind) socially and spiritually a condemnable factor. In India, rationalist-materialist philosophies were born only after a section of intellectuals began to cast doubts on the veracity of the Vedic hymns and the views spread by the priests. Sri Krishna detests those who question, challenge or refuse to accept his statements at their face value. His harsh verdict is unambiguous : "The man who is ignorant, who has no faith, who is of a doubting nature perishes. For the doubting soul,

there is neither this world nor the world beyond nor any happiness."[5]

As a corollary of this, only simple, unreasoning minds with blind faith in the tenets of neo-Brahminism are sure to be liberated ; therefore the best use of human intelligence is to kill doubts, not to entertain them : "Works do not bind him who has destroyed all doubts by wisdom."[6]

A number of subjects have been brought under discussion in the eighteen cantos of the Gita. Almost in every case the author has stated his views categorically. Whenever any cardinal principle has been touched and the final verdict pronounced the opponents have been warned of the dire consequences if they dare to disagree. Indeed, mere warnings have been considered insufficient and threatenings, imprecations and curses have been hurled at the opponents obviously with the intention of demoralising the stubborn in spirit and unbending in resolve.

Himself a man with a mind full of doubts, Arjuna asks about the fate of those *believers in God* who do not follow the Brahminical traditions and beliefs : "Those who, neglecting the ordinances of scriptures, offer sacrifices filled with faith ; what is their position, O Krishna, is it one of goodness (*sattva*) or of passion (*rajas*) or of dullness (*tamas*) ?"[7]

The propounder of the theory of "all paths leading to the same goal" did not consider even such a faithful human being entitled to liberation. The Blessed Lord can have only blind followers of Brahminism in the fold and none else. His verdict is : "The man who performs severe austerities unenjoined by the *shastras* (Brahmin religious scriptures) wedded to vanity and egoism' impelled by the force of their desires and passions ; unintelligent, tormenting the aggregated element forming the body, and Me also seated in the inner body, know these demoniacal in their resolve."[8]

Even the slightest deviation from the recognised dogmas of neo-Brahminism is intolerable. Having in this manner harshly dealt with the opponents who may be God-fearing theists but belong to other schools of philosophy than the particular one favoured by the author, Sri Krishna devotes one whole canto—the sixteenth—to the unsparing denuncia-

tion of atheists. They are lumped together in the category of *asuras* (demons) well known as *Vedavirudakas* (enemies of *Vedas*), and presented in the darkest colour. The saying "give dog a bad name and hang him" is conveniently followed. Introducing an *asura*, Sri Krishna says : "Ostentation, arrogance, excessive pride, anger, as also harshness and ignorance, these, O Partha (Arjuna), are the endowments of him who is born with the demoniac (*asuri*) nature."[9]

No vice is bad enough to be attributed to an *asura* merely because he refuses to accept the theory of the Samkhya-Yoga as explaind by teachers of neo-Brahminism ; "The demoniac do not know about the way of action or the way of renunciation. Neither purity, nor good conduct, nor truth is found in them."[10]

Coming to the heart of the controversy between theism and atheism, but remaining true to his practice of distortion of the opponent's viewpoint, Sri Krishna states : "The universe is without truth, without basis, they (*asuras*) say, without a God, brought out by mutual union and caused by lust and nothing else."[11]

There is no doubt that the attack is on the rationalists—materialist philosophy which is misrepresented to make it look stupid, ugly and hateful. It is true, as we know, that the rationalists rejected the notion of any unseen power or a Supreme God as the creator of the universe because it was self-created by the laws inherent in matter of prakriti of the Samkhya. But to say, as Sri Krishna does, that the atheist held the universe to be baseless and unreal or that mere lust caused it was sheer vulgarisation of the sublime principle. The great teacher of neo-Brahminism did not hesitate to hit the opponents below the belt.

Assuming his own premises about the rationalist-materialist philosophy to be correct, Sri Krishna proceeds to draw inferences ; "Holding fast to this view, these lost souls of feeble understanding, of cruel deeds, rise up as the enemies of the world for its destruction."[12]

It will be noted that in the condemnation of atheism in unmeasured terms there is not a shred of argument to prove the theistic stand. In the same strain are composed the

verses that follow in which ridiculous notions are put in the mouth of atheists : "Giving themselves up to insatiable desires, full of hypocrisy, excessive pride and arrogance, holding wrong views through delusion, they (*asuras*) act with impure resolves."[13] "This today by me hath been won, that purpose I shall gain : this wealth is mine in future."[14] "I have slain this enemy and others also I shall slay. I am the Lord, I am the enjoyer, I am perfect, powerful, happy."[15] "I am wealthy, well born, what other is there that is like unto me ? I will sacrifice, I will give alms, I will rejoice, thus deluded by unwisdom."[16]

Now if we overlook the spiteful manner in which the author presents the philosophy of atheism to denounce it, we can have a glimpse of the basic rationalist principles. Shorn all condemnatory terms and distortions the *asura* philosophy that emerges from the above quoted verses of the Gita may be summarized thus : "Man is the master and the maker of his destiny. In the creation of universe he stands unparalleled. He is supreme in nature. He can successfully remove one by one all the hurdles in the path towards achievement of worldly prosperity and happiness. He has the right to enjoy life and help others to do so". These simple truths are hidden in the passionate denunciations by Sri Krishna and they are the core of Charvaka philosophy.

The unbounded wrath of Sri Krishna is provoked by the rejection of the holy scriptures of the Brahmins by the atheists. Hurling a few more invectives and pouring scorn at the non-believers, the great God says : "Self-glorifying, stubborn, filled with pride and intoxication of wealth, they perform lip sacrifices for ostentation contrary to the ordinances of the *shastras* (scriptures).[17]

The atheists endeavour to live a moral life not because the holy scriptures order them to do so, but because such behaviour is needed for the good of the society. The sacrifices made by the atheists are secular and not religious for appeasement of God. This is the fundamental difference to which Sri Krishna alludes. Since atheists reject scriptural ordinances they are addressed by disreputable epithets which are by no means justified.

Another sin of the atheists is that they do not recognise the existence of soul and fail to pay due homage to it in different bodies. Prefacing his opinion with a new set of uncomplementary terms, Sri Krishna says: "Given over to conceit, force and pride and also to lust and anger, these malicious people despise Me dwelling in the bodies of themselves and others."[18]

Having in this harsh and impolite manner commented upon some of the more provocative doctrines of rationalist-materialists, the author of the Gita throws away even the little restraint he had maintained in speech while pronouncing the final verdict on the fate of the atheists. His thrusts are hard-hitting indeed : "Bewildered by numerous thoughts, enmeshed in the web of delusion, addicted to the gratification of desire, they (*asuras*) fall downward into a foul hell."[19] "These cruel haters. worst of men, I hurl constantly these evil-doers only into the womb of demons in (the cycle of) births and deaths."[20] "Cast into demoniacal wombs these deluded beings from birth to birth, do not attain to Me, O son of Kunti, they sink into lowest depths."[21]

The final curse hurled on those who are not prepared to surrender before neo-Brahminism and have the hardihood to disagree with the dogmas set forth by Sri Krishna, is bitter and unsparing : "Thinking on Me, thou shalt overcome all obstacles by My grace, but if from egoism thou will not listen thou shalt be destroyed utterly."[22]

After reading these verses of the holy poem with unbiased and open mind, he must indeed be a bold man who holds that the Gita has evolved a synthesis of the diverse concepts of Indian thought or that it preaches co-existence of all creeds and tolerance towards various cults because "they are only different paths leading to the same goal."

Lest Arjuna, who at the outset of the dialogue betrayed an element of reason in his thinking, should identify himself with *asuri sampad* (demoniacal qualities). Sri Krishna astutely hastens to assure him that he is a true believer thus forestalling him from "going astray" : "The divine properties are deemed to be for liberation, the demoniacal for bondage. Grieve not, thou art born with divine properties, O Pandava."[23]

The vehemence and anger with which the author of the Gita has taken to task the agnostics, heretics and atheists should serve to show the strong position which they still held at the beginning of the Christian era when Buddhism had already well advanced on the path of decadence. Had not the opposition been considerable and calculated to attract the attention of the people, the great teacher of neo-Brahminism would neither have cared to take notice of them nor condemned them in such bitter, strident and abusive tones.

16

Complete Surrender to God

IF the author of the Gita has taken into consideration, more or less, the doctrines of nearly all the renowned systems of Indian thought, it is not with any intention of accepting them but only to prove their hollowness and to assert the reality of *Brahman* as defined by the Vedanta and the supremacy of the Personal God (Vasudeva Krishna) as the indestructible and everlasting force which creates, sustains and destroys the universe. Even in the earlier parts of the holy poem where Sri Krishna expatiates on the Samkhya and advises Arjuna to become a yogi and achieve liberation from *samsara* (cycle of rebirths) through Pure Reason and Wisdom, he surreptitiously brings in the overlordship of the Deity as the Universal Self. But when, in course of the dialogue, Arjuna's reason is eclipsed, his emotions stirred and his imagination excited, he becomes increasingly interested in the Vedic religion and its rituals. This affords the opportunity to Sri Krishna gradually to come out more outspokenly with the cherished doctrine that he wants to popularize. Then all other theories are either thrown into shadow or fiercely opposed and maximum stress is laid on the existence of Brahman as the reality behind the illusion of the universe. Finally, the Gita ends up with the creaking peroration that the highest truth lies in complete surrender to God Who alone can liberate man.

The Gita-lovers claim that the teachings of Sri Krishna are opposed to blind faith and are meant to carry conviction through the light of reason. "The suggestions set forth in the Gita", writes the scholar-statesman, Dr. Radhakrishnan, "about the meaning and value of existence, the sense of eternal values and the way in which the ultimate mysteries are illumined by the light of reason and moral intuition provide the basis for agreement in mind and spirit so very essential for keeping together the world which has become materially one by the universal acceptance of the externals of civilisation".[1] Even a cursory examination of the poem conducted without any preconceived notions, would convince a student that while lip-sympathy is shown to Reason and Knowledge the verdict is frequently given in favour of unquestioning blind faith. Indeed, three-fourth of the poem is devoted to proving through dogmatic assertions and not logical arguments, that above and beyond everything in the universe, unseen and indescribable, is the Supreme Power which shapes the destiny of helpless mankind.

Impressing upon Arjuna the profundity of what is termed as the Samkhya, Sri Krishna, who is yet advising like a sympathetic friend and not Almighty God, says : "Know that to be indestructible by whom all this is pervaded. Nor can any (one) work the destruction of that Imperishable One."[2]

Sri Krishna recognises the Samkhya doctrine that matter (*prakriti*) and spirit (*purusha*) are both beginningless and that it is the prakriti which is the cause of the generation of causes and effects.[3] But this theory is overridden by his own dogma (not to be found in the Samkhya) that "the Highest Energy is verily Another declared as the Supreme Self who pervading all, sustaineth the three worlds and is the Indestructible Lord.[4]

In the fifteenth canto, contradicting the statement regarding prakriti being the cause of creation, Sri Krishna says that it is from purusha (spirit) that this ancient current of the world (this cosmic process) has come forth".[5] Similarly, after giving Wisdom and Reason the highest place in man's struggle for liberation, Sri Krishna adds : "It is said that senses are great, greater than senses is the mind, greater than the mind is the reason, but what is greater than reason is He."[6] "Thus under-

standing Him as greater than the Reason, restraining the self by the Self, slay thou, O mighty armed (Arjuna), the enemy in the form of desire, difficult to overcome."[7]

Even having bestowed equal status on prakriti and purusha, Sri Krishna repeatedly strives to make the latter dominant. In the thirteenth canto, prakriti and purusha are termed as *kshetra* (field) and *kshetrajna* (knower of the field). "As the one sun illumineth the whole earth, so the Lord of the Field illumineth the whole field."[8]

During the discussion on the Samkhya-Yoga it was conceded that man can morally raise himself through self-effort. This amounted to negation of divine supremacy and grace. Reasserting the helplessness of individual, it is held that the illusion caused by the gunas of prakriti can be overcome by surrendering to God and not by depending on one's own strivings : "The divine illusion of Mine caused by the qualities (gunas) is hard to pierce ; But those who take refuge in Me alone can cross beyond it."[9]

With utmost solemnity, Sri Krishna declares that since Arjuna had become uncarping (and therefore ready to accept dogmas of Brahminism), the profoundest secret containing combined wisdom with knowledge, would be imparted to him. The secret is pronounced to be "sovereign science", "sovereign secret" and "the supreme sanctity". It is reserved for the *mahatmas* and revealed to Arjuna because he has established his bona fides of being a true believer. What is this highest secret ? It is, lo and behold, nothing else but complete surrender to God : "Always glorifying Me, strenuous and steadfast in vows bowing down to Me with devotion, they (the *mahatmas*) worship Me, ever disciplined."[10] "To those men who worship Me alone thinking of no other, to those ever harmonious, I bring full security."[11] "On Me fix thy mind, be devoted to Me ; sacrifice to Me, prostrate thyself before Me, harmonised thus in the Self, thou shalt come unto Me, having Me as thy supreme goal."[12]

No sooner Sri Krishna finds that having weakened Arjuna's determination, capacity of criticism and spirit of opposition, he is on safer ground to uphold unreservedly the creed of neo-Brahminism than the Master modifies what he had stated

before. Wisdom and Reason are thrown overboard and the Deity extolled to monopolise the stage as the Supreme.

Reason is not a faculty, in the estimation of the Gita, to discriminate between virtue and vice, right and wrong, truth and untruth, but an instrument to reach God. It has to be adapted to this purpose : "Place thy mind in Me, into Me let thy Reason enter ; then without doubt thou shalt abide in Me thereafter."[13]

Wisdom and knowledge have no use unless it be to show that God is the Reality and the Creator of the universe. "The knowledge of the field and its knower do I regard as true knowledge."[14] The essence of various schools of philosophy and all systems of thought is, in the opinion of Sri Krishna, embodied in the belief that God is All powerful and Supreme : "This has been sung by sages in many ways and distinctly in various hymns and also in well-reasoned and conclusive expressions of the aphorisms of the absolute (*Brahma Sutra*)."[15]

It is not necessary to refer to the scores of verses in the Gita where these views that God is the only Reality and all power, have been repeated often almost in the same words. But in the last canto of the poem clinching the issue Sri Krishna is most candid, most decisive and most clear about it. Knowledge and reason are set at naught. The systems of thought which had been accepted as time-honoured and valuable for achievement of human aims in the beginning are brushed aside and declared of little use. It is the Supreme Lord, and He alone, who can bring eternal peace to the helpless man : "The Lord dwelleth in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, by His illusive power causing all beings to revolve, as though mounted on a potter's wheel. Flee unto Him for shelter with all thy being, O Bharata (Arjuna) ; by His grace thou shalt obtain supreme peace, the everlasting dwelling place."[16]

In all solemnity Sri Krishna declares that though this (fresh pronouncement) is "the secret of the secrets" but because Arjuna has endeared himself to God and proved his steadfastness, the supreme word is being imparted to him. And that is this : "Merge thy mind in Me, be My devotee, sacrifice to Me, prostrate thyself before Me, thou shalt come even to Me. I pledge thee My truth, thou art dear to Me."[17]

Nothing could be more alluring and tempting to the bewildered Pandava Prince than the last bait of neo-Brahminism. It was thrown in these few words: "Abandoning all duties come unto Me alone for shelter; sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins."[18] A good recipe for the cure of manifold mental ailments of the unthinking, confused, listless and dull minds.

The cult of superman coming to the rescue of human society in great distress closely follows the philosophy of the Personal God as laid down by the Gita. Just as complete surrender to Supreme God can liberate man from all sins so can a super man or a dictator free human society from innumerable ills born of misdeeds of liberals and democrats who espouse free thought and secular institutions. The philosophy of Personal God and political theory of dictatorship closely resemble each other.

The earlier advice of Sri Krishna that "man should arise himself by his own efforts" or that "pure reason and wisdom should be the final authority in deciding course of action" is superseded by the council that one should depend on divine powers in heaven and their representatives on earth for success. Arjuna is curious to know how these powers may be recognised: "How may I know these by constant meditations"? he asks. "In what aspects art Thou to be thought of by me"?[19] The tenth canto is devoted to illustrating the manifestations of God in various forms on the earth for guidance of the faithful. Here we may take note of the undisguised support extended to Vedic gods but more remarkable is to find the author of the Gita propounding the theory that power—even evil power—is to be worshipped being a manifestation of the Supreme Being. To illustrate the point, mention may be made of the following few manifestations culled from a long list given by Sri Krishna for the benefit of the devotee in which he ought to see the reflection of Almighty God:

"Of men know Me to be the monarch"[20]
"Of weapons I am the thunderbolt"[21]
"Of the beasts I am the lion"[22]
"I am all devouring death."[23]
"I am the gambling of the cheat"[24]
"Of those who chastise I am the rod"[25]

Defining the underlying principle of divine manifestation, Sri Krishna says : "Whatsoever being there is, endowed with glory and grace and vigour, know that to have sprung from a fragment of My splendour"[26] ; which means, in other words, that glory or power in whatever form it appears irrespective of its moral worth, has to be worshipped as a fragment of God's magnificence. This theory is corroborated by introduction of the institution of *avatar* (human incarnation of God). With self-confidence belittled and self-efforts devalued after complete surrender to God the helpless human being must look towards a superman or an *avatar* for delivery from the unbearable hardships and unending miseries. If there is widespread disorder and wickedness in the society, people are not advised to take courage, use their intelligence, organise and boldly face it ; they are not directed to extirpate the evil through individual and cooperative endeavour ; they are asked to wait for a saviour, a Messiah or an *avatar* who is sure to appear at the proper time. He is to be the Personal God in human form : "Whenever there is decay of righteousness, O Bharata, and there is exaltation of unrighteousness then I Myself come forth."[27] "For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers, for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness I am born from age to age."[28]

Thus according to the teachings of the Gita, a man keenly desirous of his own welfare must not only give himself up to the Unknown and Unseen God but also, when drowned in a sea of troubles, helplessly wait for the appearance of His avatar (incarnation) in human form. The Blessed Lord did not prescribe any definite test or hard and fast rules to recognise an avatar beyond stating that whatever seems vigorous, mighty or glorious should be accepted as His manifestation on the earth ; no moral criterion was even suggested by Him, for the purpose thus affording unlimited opportunities for an imposter to pose as an avatar if only he could strike awe, attain power or catch public imagination by any means fair or foul. Not surprisingly countless claimants of avatarship have appeared in the Indian society during the last fifteen centuries and continue to rise unceasingly even to this day.

17

Stand up and Fight

SHRI Krishna opens his sermon with an exhortation that Arjuna should give up faint-heartedness and stand up and fight ;[1] he also ends the discourse by warning the Pandava Prince that it will prove futile on his part to desist from fighting because nature will constrain him to do so.[2]

The is commonly accepted by the Hindus as a philosophy of peace, non-violence, non-attachment, love happiness and tolerance. Throughout the dialogue, Sri Krishna dwells on these human values and stresses the need for cultivating them to achieve final liberation (*moksha*) from the cycle of rebirths : "Who forsaketh all desires and goeth onwards free from yearnings, selfless and without egoism—he goeth to peace."[3] "He who is able to endure here on earth ere he be liberated from the body, the force born from desire and passion, he is harmonised, he is the happy man."[4] "He who is happy within, who rejoiceth within, who is illuminated within, that yogi becoming the Eternal goeth to the Peace of the Eternal."[5]

Speaking about the noble qualities of a devotee, Sri Krishna says : "He who beareth no ill-will to any being, friendly and compassionate, without attachment and egoism, balanced in pleasure and pain and forgiving, ever content, harmonious, with the self controlled, resolute, with mind and Reason dedicated to Me, he, My, devotee, is dear to Me."[6]

Enumerating the divine properties of the believers, Sri Krishna includes non-violence, truth, peacefulness, compassion to living beings, forgiveness, absence of envy and pride among them. At the same time, harshness and anger are described as demoniacal properties. Scholars have therefore been at a loss to understand why Sri Krishna should have so persistently and vigorously urged Arjuna to abandon his resolve of opposing the war and take up arms which was bound to end—and in fact ended—in enormous bloodshed and wholesale destruction.

The inconsistent teachings of Sri Krishna puzzled Arjuna and he put the pertinent question that if peace, non-violence and love of all beings be the cherished values of human life, why should the Divine Mentor instigate the Pandava Prince to participate in the impending carnage. The Blessed Lord parries the query and takes up another topic for exposition keeping poor Arjuna guessing and the future students of the Gita to answer it for themselves.

Brahmin philosophers and orthodox commentators have, with arguments, plausible and implausible, tried to show that there is no inconsistency in the teachings of Sri Krishna, at any rate so far as the issue of war and peace is concerned. Mahatma Gandhi concedes that "a literal interpretation of the Gita lands one in a sea of contradictions" but defends the thesis of the poem by asserting :

> "I do not agree that the Gita advocates and teaches violence in any part of it. See the concluding discourse at the end of chapter two. Although that chapter lends itself to a violent interpretation, the concluding verses seem to me to preclude any such intrepretation[8]

But critical scholars are far from being convinced by the sophistry of Gita-lovers. There, however, can be little doubt that if Sri Krishna, the apostle of peace and non-violence, was dislodging Arjuna from his position of stiff opposition to war and preparing him to become a full-blooded combatant some strong motive must have prompted him to do so. At the conclusion of every serious discussion of a mythological or philosophical theme, Sri Krishna significantly reverts to the question of Arjuna's reluctance to fight and advises him to change his mind.

Chiding Arjuna at the outset for his dejection in the hour of crisis which is "unknown to men of noble mind" because "it causes disgrace" and "does not lead to heaven", Sri Krishna says ; "Yield not to this unmanliness, O Partha, for it does not become thee. Cast off this petty faint-heartedness and arise, O oppressor of foes."[9]

Without caring a jot to meet Arjuna's points against fighting, Sri Krishna brings to his support the ancient Brahmin belief about soul and body : "It is said that these bodies of the eternal embodied (soul) which is indestructible and incomprehensible, come to an end. Therefore, fight O Bharata (Arjuna)."[10]

The orthodox defenders argue that in the first place Sri Krishna was asking Arjuna to fight in order to discharge his duty as a kshatriya and, secondly, from a higher philosophical plane, killing of bodies is immaterial because the soul is indestructible ; therefore the apparent inconsistency in the statements of Sri Krishna should not be considered as serious. But to Sri Krishna any plea this-worldly or other-woredly divine or human, is equally usable to provoke Arjuna into getting engaged in war. It is remarkable how the Blessed Lord who repeatedly insists on non-possession *(aparigraha)* excites caste pride of the Pandava Prince and allures him with power, fame and wealth to fight. Sri Krishna pleads :

> "Having regard for thine own duty, thou shouldst not falter; there exists no greater good for a kshatriya than a battle enjoined by duty. Happy are the kshatriyas, O Partha (Arjuna) when such a war comes of its own accord as an open door to heaven. But if thou does not this lawful battle, then thou wilt fail thy duty and glory and incur sin. Besides, men will ever recount thy ill-fame and for one who has been honoured, ill-fame is worse than death. The great warriors will think that thou hast abstained from battle through fear and they by whom thou wast highly esteemed will make light of thee. Many unseemly words will be uttered by thy enemies, slandering thy strength. Could anything be sadder than that? Either slain thou shall go to heaven, or victorious thou shall enjoy earth ; therefore arise, O son of Kunti, resolved on battle."[11]

This reasoning may be contrary to the central teaching of the Gita as hinted by Dr. Radhakrishnan[12], but Sri Krishna is more interested in shaking Arjuna from his resolve by any means than in establishing his reputation for being a logical disputant. However, he soon reverts to the religious argument and instead of persuasion employs mild threats and warnings :

> "Resigning all thy actions to Me, with thy consciousness fixed in the Self, being free from desire and egoism and from mental fever, engage in battle. (Those) who abide ever in this teaching of Mine full of faith and free from cavilling, they too are released from actions. (Those) who carp at my teaching and act not thereon, senseless, deluded in all knowledge, know thou these mindless ones as fated to be destroyed."[13]

Arjuna seems not to have been very much impressed by such minatory exhortations of Sri Krishna who is, however, untiring in his mission and is determined to convert the prince. The opportunity arrives when Arjuna betrays his infirmity of mind by entertaining wild hallucinations and illusions about the all-pervading manifestation of God (*Vishwarup darshan*). Sri Krishna combines religious emotion with worldly interest to carry his point at the critical moment while Arjuna passes through the delirium. He says :

> "Time am I, world destroying, grown mature, engaged here in subduing the world. Even without thee (thy action), all the warriors standing arrayed in the opposing armies shall cease to be. Therefore arise thou and gain glory. Conquering thy foes, *enjoy a prosperous kingdom*. By Me alone are they slain already. Be thou merely the occasion, O Savyaschina (Arjuna). Slay Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna and other great warriors as well, who are already doomed by Me. Be not afraid, Fight, thou shall conquer thy enemies in battle."[14]

We shall have occasion to consider the dangerous implications of this sermon, miscalled philosophy, but here it will suffice to point out the keen anxiety of Sri Krishna to get Arjuna involved in war.

Frightened and shuddering no doubt by the hallucination of all-pervading Divinity, Arjuna with joined palms acknow-

ledges the supremacy of Sri Krishna and offers hundreds of apologies for lapses on his part ; but there is not a word in his statement of submission to show that his opposition to war has ended and he is ready to fight. Nevertheless the prince is now in a more chastened mood and receptive frame of mind and so Sri Krishna brings home the consequences of disobedience to God.

"Thinking on Me, thou shalt overcome all obstacles by My grace ; but if from egoism thou wilt not listen, thou shalt be destroyed utterly. Entrenched in egoism, thou thinkest 'I will not fight' ; to no purpose thy determination ; nature will constrain thee."[15]

It was beyond the moral capacity of the initially bewildered and now utterly exhausted and spiritually broken Arjuna to unendingly continue resisting the temptations and the threats of the God ; only a convinced rationalist could have done so. The Pandava Prince finally succumbed and owned defeat. He said ; "Destroyed is my delusion. I have gained knowledge through Thy grace, O Immutable one. I am firm, my doubts have fled away. I will do according to Thy word."[16]

Whether Arjuna made this declaration under moral coercion or with honest conviction it is difficult to say. Significantly, there is no word about his desire to fight in his statement of surrender. Perhaps that is implied in the last sentence.

Sri Krishna's involvement in the Mahabharata War did not end with his successful persuasion to induce Arjuna to fight and slay redoubtable warriors, prominent heroes and noble sires in the enemy ranks. The Yadava Chief displayed zeal when the gigantic clash was in progress. Sri Krishna had taken a vow not to engage in battle personally and not to become a partisan. He gave his word to limit his function to serving as charioteer of Arjuna. But as the war took a turn for the worse from Pandava viewpoint, the Blessed Lord failed to restrain himself and as pointed out by Kosambi "at every single crisis of the war, his (Krishna's) advice wins the day by the crookedest of means which could never have occurred to others."[17]

Why was Sri Krishna, apostle of truth, non-violence and peace, keenly interested in seeing the bloody war through and

the noblest kshatriyas of India killed by any means fair or foul ? The Hindu thinkers have had no desire to explain this glaring contradiction in the teaching of the *Gita* because they would not like to admit a detestable fact. As in the case of other inconsistencies in the Blessed Lord's teachings, they have tried to show that at higher levels of religious experience white is black and black is white and so it is only in the thinking of petty-minded and ignorant people that the contradiction exists, not in the utterances of the God. The fact, however, is that the astute leader of the rising Brahmin counter revolution rightly guessed that the Mahabharata War would produce far-reaching consequences conducive to his mission.

Although Buddhism was in a process of decline and the forces of social revolution had almost been spent up neo-Brahminism was far from having become secure when the Gita was composed. As explained earlier the kshatriyas as a class were supporters of social progress and instrumental in shattering sacerdotal supremacy. To what straits the kshatriya revolt had reduced the Brahmins is described by Bhandarkar :

> "For the four centuries before that (that is to say from 300 B.C. to 100 A.D.) no Brahmin, no Brahmin temple, no Brahmin God, no sacrifice, no ritualistic act of any kind is ever, even once, referred to (in the Sanskrit literature). There is a very large number of gifts recorded as given by kings, princes and chiefs, by merchants, goldsmiths, artisans and ordinary householders ; but no one of them is given in support of anything or any opinion, divinity or practice with which the Brahmins had anything to do."

At another place Bhandarkar adds :

> "The period that we have been speaking of (that is from the beginning of the second century B.C. to the end of the fourth century after Christ) has left no trace of building or sculpture devoted to the use of Brahmin religion. Of course Brahminism existed ; and it was probably during the period, being developed into the form which it assumed in later times. But their religion certainly does not occupy a prominent position, and Buddhism was followed by the large mass of the people from princes down to the humble workmen."[18]

Since this plight of Brahminism was the outcome of the movement spearheaded by kshatriyas, Sri Krishna rightly judged that without reducing the unity and strength of the warrior caste to minimum neo-Brahminism could neither be secure nor stable. The Mahabharata War calculated to serve that end thus became a consuming passion of the Blessed Lord.

There is evidence to believe that the still surviving rationalist forces aware of the ruin that the War would spell to the Indian society, were opposed to it. But their voice was feeble and the unfortunate acute rivalry between different kshatriya clans coupled with absence of wise statesmanship in them, afforded opportunity to staunch missionaries of neo-Brahminism like Sri Krishna to fan the fires of enmity and hatred with the result that the war broke out and the disaster overtook India. The cream of the kshatriyas manhood was slaughtered on the battlefield.

The Mahabharata War has proved a turning point in the Indian history. It left indelible scars on the social life of the people. While it gave the final victory to Brahmin reaction and put it on the highest pedastal from which no power has been able to dislodge it till this day the forces of progress and social revolution were crushed.

At the close of the War, when the triumphant Pandavas returned to their capital after achieving the pyrrhic victory, they were received significantly not by their own clansmen and the families of warriors who were drowned in gloom and grief, not by traders and agriculturists, but by multitudes of rejoicing Brahmins. Among the spectators was a follower of Charvak. He moved in front and, rebuking Yudhishthira, asked : "What have you gained by destroying your own people and murdering your own elders ? This assembly of the Brahmins is cursing you for you have killed your kin." The unexpected outburst of a rationalist and an atheist, amidst rejoicings, stunned the admiring audience. Yudhishthira, cut to the quick, felt deeply hurt and humiliated and wanted to die but the Brahmins assured him that the Charvaka was only a demon in disguise. As reported in the *Mahabharata* the dissenting rationalist was caught hold of and burnt to ashes on the spot.[19]

But the aims set by Sri Krishna had been achieved : the War reversed the social order, the forces of revolution were smothered and the exalted position of the Brahmins was restored. Even before the effects of the gigantic clash were fully realized no less a person than Bhishma, the doyen of the vanquished kshatriya clan, issued an injunction from his death-bed advising the victorious Pandava King Yudhishthira :

> "A King, to be virtuous, must give to Brahmins offerings. Such offerings are more meritorious than *Ashvamedha* (Horse Sacrifice). The kshatriya goes to heaven as recompense of this virtue. Land should be given to Brahmins and gods. It is unpardonable to take away land from the Brahmins. Don't punish a Brahmin even by mistake for he is superior to all men. Fire is born of water, kshatriya of Brahmin and iron of stone. When iron cuts stone, fire dries water and kshatriya becomes enemy of Brahmin, they all lose their face and are destroyed. *It is the duty of the king to punish those who claim equality with the Brahmins.*"[20]

18

Brahminism by Backdoor

THE high spiritual and moral philosophy propounded by the author of the Gita in certain parts of the sacred poem should have led him to dispense with the priestcraft, for the two, being incompatible, could not co-exist. But we have seen that, when all is said and done, the author, finally discarding the various philosophical systems, advises complete surrender to *Ishvara* (Lord God) as the means of deliverance. It is not therefore surprising that he should have brought in Brahminism with all its hoary institutions and traditions by backdoor.

Each and every cardinal principle of the ancient sacerdotalism gets support in the Gita and if one verse deprecates any one of them there are others to retsore its sanctity and efficacy. Of course, the presentation of the Brahmin principles is cleverly done in a context as to render them harmless and unexceptionable in the eyes of unsuspecting, uncritical students. Nevertheless, to a careful reader there is no missing the fact that the author is anxious to preserve and strengthen the dogmas and tenets of Brahminism like belief in the Unseen Force, multiplicity of gods, caste-system, as well as practice of rituals like *yajna* and *tapas*, theories of karma, transmigration of soul, rebirth and other such primitive notions.

The Gita is, as the colophone at the end of each canto tells us, knowledge about Brahman, the One Reality behind the universe, and this statement is stressed repeatedly in the

poem. But staunch faith in monism does not impell the author to discard the multiplicity of the gods who were worshipped in pre-Buddhist times. Side by side with the Eternal Force without which nothing is said to exist, Sri Krishna accepts the reality of these lesser deities : "But those whose minds are distorted by desires resort to other gods, observing various rites, constrained by their nature. Whatever form any devotee with faith wishes to worship, I make that faith of his steady."[1]

No doubt a distinction is made between the worship of the smaller gods and that of the Supreme Being : "Temporary is the fruit gained by these men of small minds. The worshippers of the gods go to the gods but My devotees come to Me."[2] But the point is that the author of the Gita has not interpreted polytheism and replaced it by monotheism as is claimed by contemporary Hindu leaders. Unlike Islam and Christianity, which abolished the worship of innumerable gods replacing them by One Supreme Lord, the Gita upholds equally both polytheism and monotheism though the preference may be shown for the latter.

Next we come to caste-division, the bane of Indian society. As if to remove doubts created by heterodox thinkers regarding the fairness of *varnashrma* (caste system) Sri Krishna declares : "The four castes were emanated by Me, by the different distribution of qualities and actions : know Me, to be the author of them, though the actionless, and inexhaustible."[3]

To justify the unnatural and unequal division of mankind the Blessed Lord explains ; "Of Brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras, O Parantapa (Arjuna), the duties have been distributed according to the qualities born of their own nature."[4] "Serenity, self-restraint, austerity, purity, forgiveness, and also uprightness, wisdom, knowledge, belief in God are the brahmin karma, born of his own nature."[5] "Power, splendour, firmness, dexterity and also not flying from battle, generosity, the nature of a ruler, are the kshatriya karma, born of his own nature."[6] "Ploughing, protection of kin and trade are the vaishya karma, born of his own nature. Action of the nature of service is the shudra karma born of his own nature."[7]

Thus has the inequitous division of Indian people, originally made in Vedic times but disfavoured during the days of the Buddhist Revolution, been restored. What is more, the responsibility for the injustice to the lower classes, especially toilers and producers (shudras), is laid at the door of their own nature. The leader of neo-Brahminism who revived or at any rate rejuvenated the caste system was, so he says, doing no more than honestly stating a natural fact of social life. If the Brahmin came on the top and was having the best of both the worlds, and the shudra was destined to eke out miserable existence of servitude, leaders of the neo-Brahminism society were not to blame for it ; the system was nature-ordained because members of the four castes were born as such. In any case, there could be no escape in the world, says Sri Krishna, from this division which should be adhered to being natural and meritorious ; any attempt to effect any change in the God-created order was undesirable and therefore needs to be discouraged : "Man reacheth perfection by each being intent on his own karma."[8] "Better is one's own duty (as prescribed for his caste) though destitute of merits than the well-executed duty of another (caste). He who doeth the karma laid down by his own nature incureth no sin."[9]

This idea is more emphatically repeated by the Blessed Lord at another place while discussing the philosophy of karma : "Better ones own duty though destitute of merit, than the duty of another, well discharged. Better death in the discharge of one's own duty, the duty of another is full of danger".[10] The rigidity of the system is obvious : while the upper castes, particularly the Brahmin, will enjoy and rule for ever, the shudra is everlastingly condemned to a life of toil and sweat without murmur.

In the cast-ridden society envisaged by the Gita, women and all toiling and producing classes are, for no fault of theirs, defiled by their very birth coming as they are suppposed to do from the "womb of sin." They can be delivered hereafter if they take refuge in God, but should neither seek nor can find any remedy for their miseries in this world. The Brahmin however, stands apart ; even by birth he is holy ; the path is easier for him : "They who take refuge with Me, O Partha,

though of the womb of sin—women, vaishya, even shudras—they also tread the highest path. How much more then holy Brahmins and devoted royal saints ; having obtained this transient joyless world, worship thou Me."[11] Sri Krishna is conscious that the system is not just. He must have known the criticism directed against it by its rationalist opponents. Lest the wretched man assigned to hard labour which avails him little and which denies him even the minimum joy of life should grumble, the Blessed Lord puts in a word of consolation : "Congenital karma, O son of Kunti, though defective ought not to be abandoned. All undertakings indeed are clouded by defects as fire by smoke."[12]

It is not for the individual to freely choose himself what is conducive to his well-being. The all-knowing God has decided it for him even before he is born and must unquestioningly devote his life to do what is ordained by the holy scriptures. In that lies his welfare and the good of the society.

Having thus re-established the caste basis of Indian society and the supremacy of Brahmin in it, the author makes performance of *yajna* (sacrifice) an essential part of life. The Great Revolution had undermined the importance of the institution of yajna if not altogether abolished it. The Gita revived and skilfully introduced it while explaining the Samkhya-Yoga, not as a religious ritual but as a method of self-discipline : "Some pour as sacrifice hearing and the other senses into the fires of restraint: some pour sound and the other objects of sense into the fires of the senses as sacrifice. Others again into the wisdom-kindled fire of union attained by self-control, pour as sacrifice all the functions of the senses and the functions of life"[13]

Proceeding in this strain, Sri Krishna make wisdom as the culmination of sacrifice and the highest attainment of life ; for wisdom, in the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, "gives us freedom of action and liberation from the bondage of work."[14] But Sri Krishna does not stop with this definition of yajna. In another context he comes out unambiguously in support of the ritual as taught in old Brahmin scriptures ; "Having created in ancient times mankind together with sacrifice, the Lord of

creation said : By this shall ye propagate, be this to you giver of desire."[15]

What is the nature of the sacrifice that is enjoined upon a devoted follower of neo-Brahminism. Sri Krishna describes it thus : "From food creatures become ; from rain is the production of food ; rain proceedeth from sacrifice ; sacrifice ariseth from action."[16]

That the Blessed Lord here means a purely Brahmin ritual by the yajna is explained in detail : "With these (sacrifices) nourish ye the *devatas* (gods) and may the devatas nourish you; thus nourishing one another ye shall reap the supreme good. For nourished by the sacrifice, the devatas shall bestow on you the enjoyments of desire. A thief is verily he who enjoyeth what is given by them without returning them aught. The righteous who eat the remains of yajna are freed from all sin, but the impious who dress food for their own sakes they verily eat sin."[17]

Lest there should remain any doubt in the mind of a devotee about the ritual of sacrifice, Sri Krishna lays down conditions which are self-explanatory : "The sacrifices contrary tō the scriptural injunctions, without, distributing food, devoid of mantras, empty of faith is said to be tamas (darkness)."[18]

The performance of yajna is essential, but to be successful it must be done strictly in accordance with the ordinances of the Brahmin scriptures (*Vedas, Brahmanas* etc) : all else is vain and unavailing : "The eaters of the life-giving remains of sacrifice go to the changeless Eternal. This world is not for the non-sacrificer, much less the other, O best of the Kurus (Arjuna)"[19] "He who on earth doth not follow the wheel thus revolving, sinful of life, rejoicing in the senses, he, O son of Pritha (Arjuna) liveth in vain."[20]

The spirit of sacrifice which, in the last resort, meant making of gifts to the Brahmins had to be encouraged and fostered; it was to be done in the name of Faith and Devotion so that the illusion of doing it for all—God is maintained and the Brahmin does not come too much in the picture : "He who offereth to Me with devotion, a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water, that I accept from the striving-self offered as it is with devotion."[21] "I am indeed the enjoyer of all sacrifices and also the

Lord, but they know Me not in Essence and hence they fall."[22]

Laying emphasis on the high place of the ritual yajna in the beliefs of neo-Brahminism, Sri Krishna says: "Steadfastness in sacrifice, austerity and gift is called *sat* and action for the sake of the Supreme is also called *sat*."[23]

In order to confirm the religious basis of the yajna ritual, it is connected with the mystic chant of *aum tat sat* drawn from the Vedic religion: "*Aum Tat Sat*—this is considered to be the three-fold symbol of Brahman. By this were ordained of old the Brahmins, the Vedas and the sacrifices. Therefore, with the utterance of "aum" the acts of sacrifice, gift and penance enjoined in the scriptures are always undertaken by the expounders of Brahman."[24]

Not satisfied with this, Sri Krishna administers a warning against abandonment of yajna and, significantly, adds that even the wise man needs it for his purification. To make it doubly beneficial for the Brahmins nothing should be expected by a devotee in return: "Acts of sacrifice, gift and penance are not to be relinquished, but should be performed. For sacrifice, gift and penance are purifiers of the wise. But even these works ought to be performed, giving up attachment and desire for fruits. This, O Partha (Arjuna) is my decided and final view."[25]

The author of the Gita repeatedly refers to the Brahmin theory of karma, transmigration of soul and rebirth in accordance with the fruit of one's actions in this life. By all powers of persuasion at his command he endeavours to inculcate faith in these fundamental principles of Brahminism. It is not necessary to quote the relevant verses for there can hardly be two opinions on this subject.

The Buddhist Revolution had undermined the authority of the Brahmin scriptures. It was realized in the orthodox circles that if the sanctity and prestige of the scriptures is restored Brahminism could regain its ancient glory. Sri Krishna says categorically: "He who, having cast aside the ordinances of the scriptures, followeth the promptings of desire, attaineth not to perfection, nor happiness, nor the highest goal."[26]

It will be recalled that it was Sri Krishna, while discussing the Samkhya-Yoga, who had belittled the importance of the Vedas[27] and who had told Arjuna in all seriousness that scriptures only bewildered the intelligence and he should stand stable and unshaken in spirit to attain liberation.[28] But now the Blessed Lord harps on a different tune advising: "Therefore let the scriptures be thy authority in determining what ought to be done, or what ought not to be done. Knowing what hath been declared by the ordinances of the scriptures thou oughtest to work in this world."[29]

It may not be forgotten that even in the age when the Gita was composed though Buddhism had ceased to be the driving force, large numbers of people evinced little faith in the Brahmin scriptures and led their moral and spiritual life in accordance with the secular codes popularised by the heterodox schools. It is not therefore surprising that perplexed by the categorical statement of Sri Krishna about the paramount authority of the scriptures, Arjuna, not yet wholly devoid of detached thinking, enquired about the fate of people who, full of faith in God, acted in defiance of the holy books. Pat came the reply of the Blessed Lord: "The men who perform severe austerities not enjoined by the scriptures, wedded to vanity and egoism impelled by the force of their desires and passions, unintelligent, tormenting the aggregated elements forming the body, and Me also, seated in the inner body, know these demoniacal in their resolves."[30]

The reference seems to be to the practices of the Jainas and followers of other schools in general who rejected the authority of the Vedas and other scriptures (*shastras*) and sought deliverance from the cycle of rebirths through greater penances and austerities, than prescribed by the Brahmins.

Be that as it may, we would not be wrong if by *shastras* whose authority has been so vigorously upheld we understand the Vedas and Upanishads besides Smritis and other holy texts which followed the former. For Sri Krishna has himself declared: "I am indeed the Veda-knower and the author of Vedas"[31] and "I am also *Rig*, *Sam* and *Yajur*."[32] If this is so it must be accepted that the author of the Gita was setting his seal of approval not only on the existence of Vedic gods but

also the entire priestcraft elaborately described in the *Atharva Veda* the *Yajur Veda* and the *Brahmanas*. In this way the sacred poem did something more than impart high philosophic truths; it resuscitated the half-dead pernicious beliefs, degrading rituals and irrational dogmas of the long disintegrated Vedic society.

Finally, we may mention the eschatological beliefs of the author regarding death. Death was considered auspicious or inauspicious by the Brahmins merely because it occurred during certain months of the year. That belief has been revived in the Gita : "Fire, light, daytime, the bright fortnight (half of the month), the six months of the northern path (of the Sun) then going forth the men who know the Absolute go to the Absolute. Smoke, night time, so also the dark fortnight (of the month) the six months of the southern path (of the Sun) then going forth, the yogi obtains the lunar night and returns. Light and darkness, these paths are thought to be the worlds everlasting paths. By the one he goes not to return by the other he returns again."[33] The primitiveness of this belief makes a mockery of the philosophy of Reason and Wisdom ; it also jeers at the cult of Personal God. For if *moksha* (liberation) depends on the time when death occurs and dead body is cremated what use is it to attain knowledge or surrender to God. It may also be noted that no one can control the time of his own death ; the paths of *devayan* or *uttarayana* and *pitrayan* or *dakshinayana* as this notion of the Gita is termed, is merely a Brahminical superstition which has been exalted by the author of the Gita to the level of a sublime truth. Some Hindu scholars have presented it as a theory envisaging conflict between light and darkness. But this interpretation is far-fetched. In the *Gita Rahasya* Tilak says..."the Blessed Lord has Himself made a definite reference to time in mentioning the two paths, in the words "I shall mention to you that Time, dying at which Time the Karma-Yogin returns or does not return' (G.8.23) ; and there is a statement in the Mahabharata that when Bhishma was lying on the bed of arrows, he was waiting for the Uttaryana, that is for the time when the Sun begins to move towards the North for giving up his life (Bhi 120, Anu, 167)."[34] So the exposition of the eschatologi-

cal ideas in the Gita is only to reiterate and reinforce the old Brahminical belief.

In this manner the author of the Gita reintroduced, one by one, the beliefs, dogmas and tenets of the ancient religion missing nothing that was essential, only taking care to present the rejected and exploded theories imperceptibly and inoffensively, enabling Brahminism to come in by the backdoor.

19

Desireless Work

OF the ideas thrown out by the Gita, the one about work without desire for fruit, is considered to be the profoundest. In contemporary times the Hindu leaders have lavished fulsome praises on it for being unique in the domain of thought and for its potentiality to establish world peace. Dr. Radhakrishnan thinks that "action done devotedly and whole-heartedly, without attachment to the results makes for perfection". He goes to say that "If we act in the spirit of the Gita with detachment and dedication, and have love even for our enemy, we will help to rid the world of wars."[1]

The often quoted verse of the sacred poem which puts the idea in a nutshell is : "To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits, let not the fruits of action be thy motive ; neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction."[2]

This is considered to be the highest ideal for humanity set by the sublime philosophy of the Gita. But is this practicable ? Can any individual work without having an eye on the fruits of his labour ? Has any group, section or class of people in this world, not excluding the Indians, followed this ideal since it was propounded by the Gita for the first time ? And, finally, is it a wholesome ideal at all and can its practice benefit an individual or human society ?

Before these pertinent questions can be answered, it is necessary that we try to see what occasion arose for the author of the poem to enunciate the theory of desireless work.

Under sacerdotal supremacy in the Vedic Age the Indian society was divided into upper and lower castes with high and low status, unequal distribution of wealth and of the available amenities of life. The Buddhist revolution could not altogether destroy the distinctions but surely succeeded in raising the status of lower castes and toiling masses, in ameliorating their lot and in making all people feel that they were equal in every respect and the prevailing inequality was man-made. When, therefore, with the defeat of the Revolution the Brahmin institution of caste was restored and reinvigorated and the labouring millions denied social justice, it led to unhappiness, sullenness and discontent in the country. It was difficult for teeming millions to forget the good old days when a vaishya and shudra and even an outcaste could rub shoulders with a Brahmin and a kshatriya, choose his own profession and obtain more or less adequate wages for the labour done by him. Under the new circumstances created by the rise of neo-Brahminism a worker had neither the freedom to choose his avocation nor the right to demand full payment for his labour. It led to widespread disaffection and non-cooperation on the part of the working classes, the producers of social wealth. The resultant instability in all walks of life threatened the society with impending doom. Something had to be done and a method devised to stem the tide of hostility and stabilise the endangered social order.

It would seem that in the silent though wide spread campaign the working classes were joined by nonconformist intellectuals who, disgusted with Brahminic reaction but impotent to manfully face it, took to renunciation as the way to liberation. It was another aspect of the mass non-cooperation with the rising neo-Brahminism. Says Dr. Radhakrishnan : "Arjuna refuses to fight and raises difficulties. He puts up a plausible plea for abstention from activity and for retreat from the world, an idea which dominated certain sects at the time of the composition of the Gita. To convert him is the purpose of the Gita."[3]

While the Brahmin thinkers were seriously engaged in finding some effective philosophical weapon to prevail upon the recalcitrant intellectuals and the disaffected toiling masses to return to the path of cooperation irrespective of their own inclinations and interests, the author of the Gita formulated his theory of *anaskti karmayoga* (action without attachment) or work without any desire of fruits, as the true worship of Supreme God. It must be recognised that the idea was remarkably successful in achieving its immediate purpose and has served as a powerful weapon in the hands of exploiting classes throughout the past fifteen centuries in this country.

Brahminism divides Indian society into roughly two classes, the leisured among whom Brahmins and godmen (*sadhus*) are the most privileged and live on the fruits of other people's labour, and the toiling millions including soldiers, traders, working intellectuals, agriculturists, shudras and untouchable outcastes. The theory of desireless work was invented to keep the latter class in a perpetual state of slavery and let the former be the master and have the best of the world. One can understand and even appreciate the fairness of the "desireless work" theory in a classless society where all people are expected to work hard and produce social wealth and share the products equally ; but in a society of uneven classes the theory is bound to operate in a thoroughly unjust manner.

Lethargy and indifference of workers being one of the main and pressing problems encountered by the Brahmin leaders of post-Revolution era, the author of the Gita repeatedly referred to it throughout the discourse and presented his solution in different forms to bring home the crucial point of desirelessness in all actions.

The problem as dealt with in the Gita was complex and the solution too could be no simple one : to be active is essential, inactivity is sin ; no one should shun work he is called upon to do even if the work is not to his liking ; no one should care for wages ; whatever is offered should be accepted ungrudgingly and with pleasure ; the nature of work should be of no consideration ; only to work with undivided attention and with faith in God should be the aim ; this in brief is Karma Yoga or Anasakti Yoga (Yoga of detached action), the path to

liberation through activity. "Perform action, O Dhananjaya", advises Sri Krishna, "dwelling in union with the divine, renouncing attachment and balanced evenly in success and failure ; equilibrium is called yoga."[4]

Underlining the importance of work for living beings in order to exist, the Blessed Lord says : "Do thou thy allotted work, for action is better than inaction, even the maintenance of thy physical life would not be effected without action."[5] "Save work done as and for a sacrifice this world is in bondage to work. Therefore, O son of Kaunteya (Arjuna), do thy work as a sacrifice becoming free from all attachment."[6]

To restore economic security and stabilise social order, it was essential that the producing classes should work uninterruptedly. Sri Krishna ordains : "Therefore without attachment perform always the work that has to be done, for man attains to the highest by doing work without attachment."[7]

Lest it should be suspected that the philosophy of Karma Marga was a new-fangled idea of the Brahmins, Sri Krishna adduces the testimony of the most renowned kshatriya sage in support of his views : "It was even by works that Janaka and others attained to perfection. Thou shouldst do works also with a view to the maintenance of the world."[8] Janaka, mentioned in the Upanishads as a philosopher was the kshatriya king of Mithila. He was known as *rajarishi* (royal saint).

It is only when the elders who guide the destinies of the nation, follow the principle of doing desireless work constantly that the masses will follow. Therefore, Sri Krishna cautions the leaders to set up high standard by personal example : "Whatever a great man does, the same is done by other men as well. Whatever standard he sets, the world follows."[9]

The argument that great men should become beacon lights to guide the common folk is further explained by showing that God, who is under no compulsion to work, is incessantly acting to keep the world in order as also to save the society from becoming corrupt : "There is nothing in the three worlds, O Partha, that should be done by Me, nor anything unattained that might be attained, yet I am engaged in work. For, if even I did not engage in work unwearied, O Partha, men in

every way follow My path. If I should cease to work, these worlds would fall in ruin and I should be the creator of confusion of castes and destroy these people."[10]

The author of the Gita touches the core of the problem by denouncing those as ignorant who work from selfish desires and ask for wages or for work to their liking. He refers to unattractive labour which working classes were reluctant to do. He declares those intellectuals to be wise who cooperate with the leaders of neo-Brahminism and instead of fomenting disaffection among the sullen toiling multitudes advise them not to cavil at anything and be prepared to undertake any labour without asking for the fruits of work. The nature of the problem is clearly defined by Sri Krishna thus : "As the ignorant act from attachment to action, O Bharata (Arjuna), so should the wise act without attachment desiring the welfare of the world. Therefore, let no wise man unsettle the ignorant people attached to action ; but acting in harmony with Me let him render all action attractive."[11]

From the Blessed Lord's admonition it is permissible to draw two inferences : First, that there were leaders who upheld the objections of the working classes and supported their cause ; they are warned to reconsider their position and do as bidden. Secondly, the appeal is made in the name of welfare of the world (*loka sangraha*). Evidently the author had the world of the haves, the privileged, in mind and not the world of the have-nots, the disinherited and dispossessed. It should not cause surprise as this has been the method of exploiting classes in every society in the human history : to present their own problems in a way as to make them the problems of the whole humanity.

Raising the discussion to religious level and bringing the analogy of God and Brahmin sages of ancient times, into it to make his thesis appear reasonable, Sri Krishna says : "Works do not defile Me ; nor do I have yearning for their fruit. He who knows Me thus is not bound by works. So knowing was work done also by the men of old who sought liberation. Therefore do thou also work as the ancients did in former times."[12]

The loyal and obedient worker has to be told what neo-Brahminism expects of him so that he may achieve liberation and enjoy happiness hereafter if not in this world. The conditions are so clearly worded that any comment on them is unnecessary : "Having abandoned attachment to fruit of action, always content, nowhere seeking refuge, he does nothing though he is ever-engaged in work. Having no desire, with his heart and self under control, giving up all greed, performing actions by the body alone, he commits no sin. Content with whatsoever he obtaineth without effort, balanced in success or failure, though acting he is not bound. The work of man whose attachments are sundered, who is liberated, whose mind is firmly founded in wisdom, who does work as a sacrifice, is dissolved entirely."[13]

For demanding full wages of his labour a worker is called greedy but the man who pockets the fruits of his labour gets it by chance or by the grace of God and should be allowed to have it. There is not a word of disapproval for what the exploiter does. This is the ugly aspect of the philosophy of Karma Yoga taught by the Gita and extolled by the Hindu savants. "It (the Gita teaching) is intended," says C. Rajagopalachari, "to be the basis for actual moulding of men's lives, so as to develop a habitual and spontaneous attitude of selflessness and detachment."[14]

A worker will be entitled to the appelation of yogi and considered fit for moksha if he acquires the virtue of desireless action, have faith in Ishvara and is not defiant against the unjust social order in which inequality born of caste system is the rule : "Having abandoned attachment yogis perform action only by the body, by the mind, by the *budhi* (intelligence) and even by the senses for purification of self."[15] "Verily those who renouncing all action in Me and intent on My worship meditating on Me with whole hearted yoga, these I speedily lift from the ocean of death and existence, O Partha, their minds being fixed on Me."[16] Of course while a loyal worker has to be rewarded with hope of liberation hereafter the disloyal one bent upon securing social justice must be shown his place : "The harmonised man, having abandoned fruit of action,

attaineth to the eternal peace, the non-harmonised impelled by desire and attached to the fruit, is (therefore) bound."[17]

Any ambiguity that may have persisted in the mind of the reader about the import of the Karma Yoga has been removed in the last canto of the poem dealing with the cult of the Personal God where the main thesis is summarised in a forthright manner: "Renunciation of duties that are prescribed (by the *shastras*) is not proper; the relinquishment thereof from delusion is said to be born of *tamas* (darkness). He who gives up a work from fear of physical suffering, saying (this work is) 'painful' thus performing a passionate relinquishment. He who performeth a prescribed duty as a thing that ought to be done, renouncing all attachment and also the fruit—his relinquishment is regarded as *satvika* (enlightened)."[18]

Though clothed in religious or "spiritual" phraseology this was the estimation of loyal and disloyal workers in the eyes of neo-Brahmin economists and politicians. A virtuous man is a blind conformist entertaining no doubt whatsover about the prevalent social code and ever willing to do any work irrespective of the adequacy or inadequacy of wages offered and the nature of the work ordered to be done by him. For the welfare of the exploiter-world every task had to be undertaken and accomplished by the *satvik* (good) worker and no objection as "why" had to be raised: "The wise man, who renounces, whose doubts are dispelled, whose nature is *satvika* (of goodness) has no aversion to disagreeable work and no attachment to agreeable work."[19]

Reiterating that work was in no case to be given up and insisting that the desire for fruits was to be abandoned, Sri Krishna says: "It is indeed impossible for any embodied being to abstain from work altogether. But he who gives up the fruit of work, he is said to be *tyagi* (relinquisher)."[20] Again: "An action which is ordained (by *shastras*) done by the undesirous of fruit, devoid of attachment, without love or hate, that is said to be *satvika* (of goodness)."[21]

How is the work of a disloyal worker, who is self-respecting and assertive, protests against coercion and demands due wages and suitable work, to be judged. Sri Krishna answers: "But that work which is done by one longing for desires, or again

with egoism or with much effort, that is declared to be *rajasi* (passionate). That work undertaken from delusion without regard to capacity and consequences—loss and injury to others—that is declared to be *tamasi* (of darkness)."[22]

What do the vague statements like "without regard to capacity", "consequences" and "loss and injury to others" signify ? They mean that if workers want work of their choice or stick to their demand of full wages it is bound to cause damage to the large interests of society dominated by upper classes. The real intent is being concealed in a way that suggests that the workers' case is not based on reason and is therefore indefensible.

And, finally, giving the verdict about the worker himself, Sri Krishna, as is his wont, reserves the harshest epithets for the one who disagrees with his philosophy of Karma Yoga and stands by his rights : "The doer who is free from attachment, who has no speech of egoism, full of resolution and zeal and who is unmoved by success or failure he is said to be of the nature of "goodness" (*satvika*). "The doer who is swayed by passion, who eagerly seeks the fruit of his works, who is greedy, of harmful nature, impure, who is moved by joy and sorrow—he is said to be of "passionate" nature (*rajasi*). "The doer who is unbalanced, vulgar, obstinate, deceitful, malicious, indolent, despondent and procrastinating, he is said to be of the nature of dullness" (*tamasi*).[23]

It is the acceptance of this philosophy of Karma Yoga (desireless work) which induced the teeming millions of India to become uncomplaining, submissive, contented equally under the severest repression of the native upper class tyrants and cruel oppression of foreign desperadoes for nearly fifteen hundred years. It emasculated them and deprived them of all capacity to rise in revolt against the unjust order of society. It brought in its train dire poverty, utter wretchedness, hardships and miseries in which hundreds of millions lived and groaned in the slender hope that they will get justice and happiness in the next world. As we shall see it subjected India to outside invasions and foreign rule.

It is well to remember that whatever claims may be made by its votaries for Karma Yoga in the province of religion so far

as the mundane affairs were concerned its code of conduct soley applied to the producing and the exploited classes ; the leisured sections were free from its application for they neither worked nor had any need to ask for due wages ; their only concern was to appropriate the fruits of other's labour and therefore the "desireless work" philosophy admirably suited them to appropriate and preserve the unearned gains. Karma Yoga stabilised the shaky Brahmin social system and helped the exploiters to play their game cheerfully and fearlessly. While the upper classes enjoyed life with all available amenities, luxuries and vulgarities the so-called happiness of the down-trodden and poverty-stricken masses was imaginary. They were promised happiness not by having creature comforts in this world but in the belief that they were performing their proper duties as ordained by the holy scripture for union with the Divine or for a good life hereafter.

20

Murder with Impunity

IN the Upanishadic schools where free thinking had unlimited scope, there developed a dangerous doctrine in respect of the attitude towards moral distinction between good and evil. An assertion is repeatedly made, particularly in the earlier Upanishads, that a possessor of Supreme Knowledge has no need to make any such distinction. One of the passages of *Brihadaranyaka* says : "He (who possesses Supreme Knowledge) is not overcome by two thoughts; neither the thought "I did wrong" nor the thought "I did right." Verily he commands them both. What he has done and what he has not done do not bother him."[1]

Again: "If much (fuel) is laid on fire all of it burns to ashes. Just like that one (possessing knowledge of Supreme Being) may commit evil deeds (but he) consumes all and remains clean, pure, ageless and immortal."[2]

The *Chhandogya Upanishad* declaring the Brahman world to be free from evil, expresses similar views. It says: "As grass laid on fire would be consumed so all the evil deeds of him who offers *agni hotra* sacrifice and knows it thus (is spiritually awakened), are burned up."[3]

The *Kaushitaki Upanishad* enunciated the same doctrine in clearer though somewhat disgusting terms : "He who knows (the *Atman*) by no deed of his is the world injured, not by theft, nor by killing of his own mother, nor by killing of his

own father; he does not show any signs (of guilt) by change of colour on his face after he has done any evil deed."[4]

It seems that later thinkers in the Upanishadic Age realised the ruinous consequences that would follow the acceptance of this pernicious logic and lost no time in denouncing it. They asseverated that virtue is the *sine qua non* for knowledge if perfection is to be attained. The author of the *Katha Upanishad* for example, declares: "Brahman cannot be reached by him who has not first given up bad conduct."[5] He stresses further that "impure men who are unmindful (of moral rectitude) and do not understand (good character) cannot reach the goal."[6]

The author of the Gita has followed in the footsteps of the *Chhandogya* and the *Kaushitaki* and, more uncompromisingly, adopted the deleterious view while asserting the excellence and superiority of the Vedanta over other schools of Indian Philosophy. When Sri Krishna advises Arjuna to "know that (spiritual force to be indestructible by which all this universe is pervaded and that no one can work the destruction of that imperishable one,"[7] the statement may be challengeable but is not reprehensible. The great teacher proceeds to add: He who regardeth this (the dweller in the body) as a slayer, and he who thinketh he is slain, both of them are ignorant. He slayeth not nor is he slain."[8] By maintaing such a view Sri Krishna was walking on slippery ground and leading the society to commit moral suicide. For if the idea goes round that in the eyes of highest religion an assassin has committed no sin it is bound to encourage criminal propensities on a large scale bringing the society to wreck and ruin. Yet, throughout the dialogue, Sri Krishna has unblushingly preached this doctrine (if it may at all be called a doctrine) and entered into a hot argument with Arjuna prompting him to engage in the war and slay all the renowned leaders of the opposing army of Kauravas on the plea that *atma* (soul) being indestructible no sin would be committed by wholesale slaughter of warriors in the enemy ranks. Says the Blessed Lord: "He (soul) is never born, nor does he die at any time, nor having (once) come to be will he again cease to be. He is unborn, eternal, permanent and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain."[9] Again "He who knows that it (soul) is indestructible and eternal,

uncreated and unchanging, how can such a person slay any one, O Partha (Arjuna), or cause anyone to slay."[10]

While enunciating the theory of "murder with impunity", Sri Krishna is utterly unconcerned about the present life of the individual, his right to live. It is debatable, to say the least, if the soul exists and if there is any life hereafter. But even if rebirth is accepted as true, it is callous to suggest that since *atma* cannot die and lives for ever, therefore committing murders and massacres is no crime. With the acceptance of this "doctrine" there can be no obedience to any law no peaceful and ordered society, and anarchy is bound to rule supreme.

Sri Krishna, however, did not rest content with these statements. He elaborated the idea further and at every step he became clearer and also more extravagant. He thunders and impresses on Arjuna:

> "Time am I, world destroying grown mature, engaged here in subduing the world. Even without thee (thy action) all the warriors standing arrayed in the opposing armies shall cease to be. Therefore, arise thou and gain glory. Conquering thy foes, enjoy a prosperous kingdom. By Me alone are they slain already. Be thou merely the occasion, O savyasachina (Arjuna). Slay Drona, Bhishma, Jayadratha, Karna and other great warriors as well who are already doomed by Me. Be not afraid, thou shalt conquer thy enemies in battle."[11]

In this amazing statement Sri Krishna was expatiating on another aspect of the same "doctrine". The helpless individual is a plaything in the hands of God who is responsible for each and every event and occurrence including killings and assassinations in the world. Everything is ordained and predestined; the individual merely carries out the behests of the Lord as an automation. We shall see later how the society fared after this lesson of the Blessed Lord was learned by the Indian people and acted upon by evil-intentioned and criminally-inclined sections during the days of darkness. Here we may confine our enquiry to fully understand the idea of the author of the Gita and what contemporary commentators have said about them.

Eternalness and indestructibility of the *atman* is not the only argument which the author employes to exonerate murderers from moral turpitude. He uses some other reasoning too to prove the thesis bringing in this connection *prakritivada* of the Samkhya to his support. Sri Krishna says: "All actions are wrought by the *gunas* (qualities) of nature only. The self deluded by egoism thinketh: "I am the doer". But he, O mighty armed (Arjuna), who knoweth the essence of the division of the qualities and functions, holding that "the *gunas* (qualities) move amidst the *gunas* (qualities)", is not attached."[12] It is implied in the argument of the author that the individual has no freedom and is helpless, it is the *prakriti* (nature) consisting of self-propelled *gunas* (qualities) which functions and compels the individual to behave in a particular manner. Thus he is absolved of all responsibilities for his deeds, good or bad. In the fifth canto of the Gita this point is presented more comprehensively:

> "The harmonized one who knoweth the essence of things should believe. 'I do not do anything whether seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, breathing sleeping, speaking, giving, grasping, opening and closing the eyes'; he holds "the senses move among the objects of senses."[13]

Apart from the fact that the argument of individual's helplessness is incompatible with the advice given in the parts of the poem that "self must raise itself by self-efforts" and "the senses should be strongly controlled by the buddhi", Sri Krishna attributing all power to *gunas*, once again exonerates the individual from moral responsibility for his deeds.

Clinching the matter in the last canto of the poem, the author reiterates that Pure Reason and moral promiscuity go together: "He who is free from egoistic notion, whose Reason is not affected, though he slay these people, he slayeth not nor is he bound."[14]

The cumulative effect of the assertive teaching of the injurious idea on the mind and behaviour of those who accept it as divine truth must be and has been wholly obnoxious. For no crime committed by him will the individual who reposes faith in such a doctrine," feel repentent or remorseful and

deserving punishment. Attempts have been made by Hindu scholars in the past centuries to uphold the doctrine with plausible reasoning. Among other arguments two are commonly repeated: first, no man if he has attained wisdom can commit misdeeds and, secondly, a perfect man is above any distinction between right and wrong. The doctrine has however come under fire from every sober thinker who has not failed to detect the viciousness it contains and has therefore denounced it. But equally strongly has the "doctrine" been supported and defended against these onslaughts by the Hindu writers.

We shall first quote what some distinguished contemporary Hindu commentators have said in justification of the belief. B. G. Tilak writes:

> "But stanza 17 is not to be understood as authorising that one who has conquered the Hope and Fruit, may do any evil he likes. As that which ordinary persons do, is done by them with the idea of satisfying selfish purposes, they perform wrong actions. But the man whose selfishness, avarice, or Hope or Fruit, have been fully annihilated, and to whom all created beings are the same is not capable of injury to another; because the sin is in the Reason and not in the Action. It, therefore, necessarily follows, that even if a man, (whose reason has first been proved to be pure and clean), does something which may appear improper from the wordly point of view yet the seed of that Action must be pure and stanza 17 says that such a pure-minded person cannot be held responsible for such action."[15]

Swami Chidbhavananda explains it thus:

> "Modifications such as agency and egoism create difference between man and man. But as man evolves high, he is able to outgrow all modifications and be established in Pure Consciousness. Let us take cases of men being affected by modifications and those not being affected by them. Men act on the stage as murdering and as being murdered. These acts being pretence, agency and egoism are absent in them. The actors are not affected by stage modifications. But where an actual murder takes place, the concerned men are affected by the modification of agency and egoism. Whereas to spiritually evolved man stage act and life act are one and the same. Because of

the absence of egoism, no modification of any kind takes place in his mind."[16]

Dr. Radhakrishnan defends the theory in these words:

"This passage does not mean that we can commit crimes with impunity. He who lives in the large spiritual consciousness will not feel any need to do any wrong. Evil activities spring from ignorance and separatist consciousness and from consciousness of unity with Supreme Self only good can result."[17]

Whether or not the mythical person possessing Pure Consciousness evisaged by the *Gita* and described in the commentaries of Hindu savants, exists, the theory of murder with impunity created havoc in Indian society when individuals and groups of men criminally-inclined adopted it as their practical philosophy of life. The doctrines and ideas contained in the sacred poem have galvanised many people overflowing with energy into action. In his *Essays on the Gita* Sri Aurobindo Ghosh says : "Its essence is not merely philosophical and academic but immediate and living, an influence both for thought and action, and its ideas are actually at work as a powerful shaping factor in the revival and renewal of a nation and culture."[18]

That is not surprising. If the Gita contains the best code of moral conduct for human society, as it dinned into our ears by its admirers, no one should feel indignant when the common people adopt and practice this or that theory laid down in it. The explanations offered by Hindu commentators have never convinced critical scholars outside the ranks of the Vedantists. Looked at from any angle the theory of "Murder with Impunity" has been declared as the most dangerous idea which it certainly is. A. C. Bouquet says : "In these earlier Upanishads it is affirmed that the possession of *vidya* or mystical knowledge actually cancels all past sins and even permits the knower to continue unblushingly in what seems to be much evil, with perfect impunity. This is a dangerous doctrine. In the final stage of the perfected man there can be no action, so there can in consequence be neither moral nor immoral acts. It may however be argued that since to Hindu thought imperfection is the cause of immorality, man when

perfected will certainly be beyond evil, and since evil is merely the negation of good, the final state of perfection is one which, while "good" in an absolute sense, does not need the use of a term which only has meaning when used in antithesis. In practice this may well lead some persons to a rather repulsive form of antinomianism and observers say it does."[19]

Several episodes (to be narrated presently) in the history of India after the *Gita* became the accepted holy scripture of Hindu society, are abundant proof that the theory had influenced sections of people and many individuals to behave in that atrocious manner.

21

Supreme Among the Scriptures

APPEARING soon after Badrayana's *Brahma Sutras* which vigorously combated the doctrines not in full accord with the orthodox system of Indian philosophy, the *Bhagavad-Gita* received a cold reception among the Brahmins because it had given prominence to the Samkhya, refrained from denouncing it and tried to synthesise various concepts of Indian thought. The leaders of neo-Brahminism were dissatisfied with the contents of the Gita and believed that it could not prove helpful in propagation of their creed. It seems that both Sri Krishna and Arjuna felt dejected at the poor estimation of their work and wanted to make good the "lapse" by revising their doctrines. So in the Ashvamedha Parvan of the *Mahabharata epic*, Arjuna feigns that he had forgotten the fine advice given to him at the advent of the War by Sri Krishna and prays for a fresh lesson to revive the discourse. But the latter too expresses his inability to draw upon his memory and repeat what he had said on that fateful occasion. Then both sit together and produce a new treatise known as the *Anu Gita* which excessively extols Brahminism and Brahmins without giving any quarter to those who hold different views on religion. There is no indulgence in eclectic thinking or accommodation for other beliefs. Clearly, it was felt necessary to offset the effects of the *Bhagavad-Gita* by the incredibly shoddy treatise which, however, went into oblivion while the

former received increasing recognition and went from strength to strength with the passage of time.

The *Anu Gita* is not a supplement to the *Bhagavad-Gita*, as some scholars elucidate ; the former is, in fact, a disclaimer of the show of liberalism and humanism made in the latter. But the *amende honourable* failed to rehabilitate Arjuna and Sri Krishna in the eyes of the Brahmin orthodoxy. In the sixteenth book, (Mausala Parvan) of the *Mahabharata*, describing the last days of Sri Krishna he is shown downcast and miserable at the destruction of his own Yadava clan : he retires to a desolate forest and, while brooding over his past, is killed with an arrow by Jara, a hunter. In the heaven where Indra and Yama rule, the Blessed Lord sits as a trifling figure in an inconspicuous corner. Arjuna fares even worse. After passing a disgraceful period on earth he is shown in the eighteenth (last) book of the Epic as being thrown into hell undergoing extreme tortures for his misdeeds. It is at the intercession of his elder brother, Yudhishthira, that he is lifted to heaven.

The *Bhagavad-Gita*, as we have seen, is not an integrated philosophy of life. It attempts to synthesise almost all currents of thought from early times in Indian History to the day when the poem was composed. In the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan "from the crude fetishism of the savage to the creative affirmation of the saint", the *Bhagavad-Gita* contains "the whole gamut of human spirit."[1] Although it is basically and essentially a Brahminical compendium it does not leave any aspect of human life untouched and, indeed, it tries to answer almost every social, religious, intellectual and ethical problem.

"Millions of Hindus for centuries have found comfort in this great book", says the philosopher-statesman.[2] The very demerit of its teachings namely their contradictions and inconsistencies, proved an asset in the Indian society which suffered from the spiritual illness of affirmation and denial at the same time after the fall of Buddhism. "The divine but rather scrambled message", says D. D. Kosambi, "with its command of expository Sanskrit is characteristically Indian in

attempting to reconcile the irreconcilable, in its power of gulping down sharp contradictions painlessly."[3]

The contradictions of the Gita have enabled two Hindus with entirely different outlooks on life to get satisfactory answers to their questions from different verses of the sacred poem and their doubts are thus easily resolved. As Winternitz points out :

> "The work owns this great popularity to the very circumstances that the most conflicting doctrines and religious views are united in it, so that adherents of all schools and sects could make use of it, and even today the strictest Brahmin is just as much edified by it as the adherent of the Brahmo-Samaj and the believing theosophist under the leadership of Annie Besant."[4]

An extreme example of the contradictory interpretation of the teachings may be cited from contemporary Indian history as that of Mahatma Gandhi and his assassin, Nathuram Godse. While the former claimed that "to me the Gita became infallible guide of conduct" and "dictionary of daily reference,"[5] the latter, declaring the Mahatma's politic life to be harmful for the Hindu community, murdered him in the broad daylight and subsequently recited verses from the sacred poem to justify his heinous crime before the Punjab High Court trying him for homicide.[6]

A psuedo-rationalist finds as much food for thought in the Gita as a blind devotee of a Personal God secures guidance for achievement of *moksha* (liberation), provided they concentrate attention on those passages relevant to their purpose. It is only when an honest, intelligent and bold Hindu critic—a rarity in India—closely studies the entire scripture that he begins to discover glaring flaws causing him perturbation and dismay. But throughout the long dark age that followed the fall of Buddhism the critical faculty of the Indians was stifled and discredited. Under the circumstances, the Gita speedily earned name and fame for being a mine of knowledge and source of peace. "There are indications", writes Hill, "that the doctrine of the Gita was not at first accepted by the orthodox ; but it can not have been very long before the poem was adopted as part of the *prasthana trayi* or triple canon,

of the Vedantic school, and was thenceforward universally accepted by widely differing schools of thought."[7] Hill calls the poem an uncompromising eirenicon :

> "The poet is determined (he says) to appease the orthodox ; the Veda and its *devas*, the Upanishads with the Vedantic theory of Brahman-Atman, the conceptions of *purusha* and *ishvara*, Samkhya knowledge and Yoga practice-none of these are neglected."[8]

Assuaging the lacerated feelings of the defeated revolutionary sections on the one hand, and encouraging orthodoxy on the other, the author of the Gita helped in raising the drooping spirits of the Indians who were passing through a period of intellectual turmoil, political disorder and personal insecurity. It served as an instrument for stabilization, at any rate for a period of time ; and therefore earned recognition and gratitude.

With the acceptance of the Gita doctrines, neo-Brahminism though firm on its ancient base, ceased to have the old complexion. It appeared as a new faith unrecognizable from its previous form : revolutionary and progressive by profession, but dogmatic and illiberal in essence. A great admirer of the scripture, H. V. Divatia, writes :

> The Gita has, indeed, struck a new path of solving the intricate problems of human conduct but the path being one of the adjustments of the decaying and unsuitable old with the growing feeling of a new way of life, it cannot be understood unless we know what the Gita wanted to construct and how it proceeded to do so. He (Krishna) saw that Aryan civilisation could be saved not by breaking with the past, but by utilising the teachings of the Vedas and Upanishads, for founding a new theory of life which would be acceptable to all men of average attainments."[9]

After having been raised to the exalted rank of a scripture, the *Bhagavad-Gita* shared the honour of being the guide of Hindu society with *Upanishads* and the *Brahman Sutras*. The three became known as the *prasthana trayi* or Triple Canon. The three became authoritative on matters of spiritual concern to the society. Even today Hindu scholars generally treat them as such. Swami Chidbhavananda says :

> "If a question is asked as to which is the scriptural authority in Hinduism, the answer is : this trinity. There is not a single cardinal point in Hinduism that is not touched in these books. If ever a conflict arises between the statements in the Prasthana Trayam and other sacred books, the verdict of the former alone is traditionally accepted as final."[10]

But though in the centuries following its composition the Gita was no more and no less than that of the Upanishads and the Brahma-Sutras, gradually the other two were eclipsed or at least thrown into background and the holy poem of 700 verses emerged as the supreme scripture of the Hindus which occupied the position of their unquestioned guide. Its exaltation was described in a popular verse ; "*Gita sugita kartavya kim anyaih shastra vistriah*" [It is quite enough if one thoroughly studies the *Gita* ; what is the use of dabbling in the other (scriptures)] ? That being the case, no scholar could ignore to study the sacred poem if he wanted to acquire proficiency in ancient lore. As a matter of fact, when a writer or a thinker desired to propound a new theory of his own, it was expected that he could do so only by seeking support of one or the other doctrine of the Gita ; otherwise there was little chance of his securing the approval of learned scions in India for what he had to say. That is why Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhava, Vallabha, Jnaneshvara ; and a whole host of idealist philosophers who flourished in medieval India, had to clothe original ideas in their commentaries on the Gita instead of presenting them in separate treatises of their own. "Every important later Hindu thinker", says Archie J. Brahm, "has had to come to terms with it (*the Bhagavad-Gita*). Either he had to accept its literal message or show that his own view of the world can be found stated in it somewhere or be made to fit with it through some ingenious interpretation."[11]

The unparalleled popularity and power enjoyed by the Gita subjected it to gross misrepresentation at the hands of its Hindu admirers. As if its own contradictions and inconsistencies were not enough to make it a highly controversial book, commentators endeavoured to read in its verses what he wished to find in them and not what in fact is

there ; meanings were given to words and passages interpreted amazingly and imaginations were stretched as wide as possible for the purpose. The greater a scholar with a set purpose and preconceived notions, the more he indulged in the game of hair-splitting and misrepresentation. It has compelled even an orthodox writer like Divatia to admit that "the various commentaries on the Gita contain subtle reasoning and learned discussions which are conspicuous by their absence in the Gita itself."[12]

And what is not interesting in this is that every commentator claims that his interpretation and none else is the correct one. When confronted with the divergence in his advocacy of non-violence and the main Gita doctrine in support of bloody war, Mahatma Gandhi candidly owned that he deliberately made the Gita teaching yield a meaning which it does not really bear. "I have admitted", says he, "in my introduction to the Gita, known as *Anasakti Yoga*, that it is not a treatise on non-violence, nor was it written to condemn war, Hinduism, as it is practised today, or has ever been known to have been practised, has certainly not condemned war as I do. What, however, I have done is to put a new but natural and logical interpretation upon the whole teaching of the Gita and the spirit of Hinduism."[13]

Unlike some other Hindu scriptures, the Gita is not very difficult to read or comprehend. One can readily agree with swami Chidbhavananda when he says that "a faithful translation into a known language is all that is required. A devoted and repeated reading of chapter after chapter will reveal to an ordinary student all the sublime ideas contained in that sacred book."[14] Yet the fact remains that the commentators both of medieval and modern times, have enveloped the poem in abstruseness and obscurity which lend a student in the clouds in which he is lost. Even Swami Chidbhavanada has been unable to resist the temptation of contributing his mite to the mist by his commentary. Nevertheless, there is in the words of B. G. Tilak, "no other work in the whole of Sanskrit literature, which explains the present Hindu religion

in as succinct and yet as clear and unambiguous a manner as the Gita."[15]

The Hindu conception of life is no less the outcome of the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gita than of the views expressed by a number of distinguished commentators who flourished during the past fifteen centuries. It is to the works of these eminent authors that we should turn our attention now.

PART THREE

Influence of the Gita on Indian Life

22

Acute Differences over the Doctrines

VOICING the lament of many a devotee, Vaman Pandit, a famous Maratha poet, in his commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gita*, says : "O Blessed Lord, in this *Kaliyuga* (Corrupt Age) every one interprets the Gita according to his own views ; every one on some pretext or other gives a different meaning to the Gita but I do not like their doing this, though they are great."[1] The Pandit should have known that more than anyone else the Blessed Lord was Himself responsible for it because the differences over intepretation are inherent in the teachings of the Gita. No sooner was the poem accepted as a holy text in orthodox circles than it started to be interpreted to his advantage by every teacher intent upon spreading his set of ideas among the people. By the very nature of things such men had to concentrate on the belief or tenet more acceptable to them in the entire range of thoughts in the Gita, to the exclusion of all the others. Indeed, it became the main task of the commentator to show that every utterance in the divine dialogue supported his theme and if properly studied betrayed no contradiction or inconsistency.

Pointing to the common failing of the Gita-lovers, B.G. Tilak notes :

> "Therefore, different commentators, who have propounded different doctrines, usually accept as important only such of these statements as are consistent with their own cult, and either say that the others are unimportant, or skilfully twist the meanings of such statements as might be totally consistent with their cults, or wherever possible they draw hidden meanings or inferences favourable to themselves from easy and plain statements and say that the particular work is an authority for their particular cult."[2]

The first outstanding commentator who left an indelible mark on the philosophy of the Gita was a brilliant Namboodiri Brahmin Shankaracharya, from the South. He was born at Kaladi in the Kerala State. Though K.T. Telang thinks that Shankara lived in the sixth century A.C., it is generally accepted now that he belongs to the ninth century (788-820 A.C.) He was a poet, a devotee, a debator and a reformer. His intellectual attainments were of a high order and, by any standard, astounding for he died at the young age of 32. Besides composing a number of devotional songs, Shankara wrote commentaries on major Upanishads, the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Bhagavad-Gita* in which he developed some original theories of his own under cover of explaining the sacred texts. Shankara's commentaries on the *Brahma Sutra*, the *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Upanishads*, and his original philosophical works (such as the *Vivekachudamani* (The Crown Jewel of Discrimination) have exercised an incalculable influence on the history of philosophy throughout the Far and Middle East."[3]

While studying Shankara's commentaries it should not be forgotten that in his time Buddhism had considerably declined but not altogether disappeared from India ; it was still a force to be reckoned with and, therefore, the Brahmins considered it to be a lurking danger which had to be warded off ; Shankara's writings were for that reason mainly directed against it.

Shankara is a Vedantist and the most striking feature of his writings is that he squeezes the Prasthan Trayi to prove his extreme monism which makes Brahman (Universal Self) the only Reality and all else in the world as an appearance or an illusion of the finite self in its state of ignorance. U.C.

Bhattacharjee tersely describes the core of Shankar's philosophy in these words :

> "All that we see around us and all that we feel, consist of such stuff as dreams are made of—a stupendous *maya* or illusion. Brahman the one Ultimate Reality, is only an existence, without any qualities by which it could be described. Brahman is pure consciousness ; not a subject knowing an object for there is nothing other than Brahman of which Brahman could be conscious."[4]

Shankara had little difficulty in seeking support for this view in Gita, but neither all the Vedantists agreed with him in his theory of *maya* nor could he convince the rationalists and Buddhists of his stand. As we have seen the Gita is not opposed to a Vedantist having faith in countless gods (*devatas*), though he must at the same time own undivided allegiance to the Supreme Self, the only Reality. Shankara came into clash with such Vedantists. He could not also prove by reasoning the illusory nature of the physical body and the world which had objective reality in the eyes of the materialists, the Buddhists and the Jainas.

Primarily Shankara was a vigorous propounder of *jnana marga* (path of knowledge) or philosophical meditation. The essence of his teaching is : "Realise through discrimination that you are pure, stainless and eternal Brahman, completely different from body and the world which are creations of *avidya* (ignorance)". In his systems self-knowledge is of highest importance and the self is the self of all things. He pointedly observes that this knowledge cannot be had by service, work or devotion to Deity, nor for that matter, is it mere cognition to know self. To know Brahman is not enough, one must realize it. When such realisation dawns nothing remains, not even the existential self which we look upon as ego, nor the world nor the universe. "Basing his reasoning on the Vedic formula, *tat tvam asi* "That art thou", he developed with unwavering consistency", says Zimmer, "a systematic doctrine taking the Self (*Atman*) as the sole reality and regarding all else as the phantasmagoric production of nescience (*avidya*). The cosmos is an effect of nescience, and so also is that interior ego (*ahankara*) which is everywhere

mistaken for the Self. *Maya*, illusion, mocks the perceiving, cogitating and intuitive faculties at every turn. The self is hidden deep. But when the self is known there is no nescience, no maya, no avidya, i.e. no macrocosm or microcosm-no world."[5]

At the level of realization of Brahman nothing is seen as real but the non-dual One. For this reason Shankara's philosophy has come to be known as *Advaita* (non-dual) *Vedanta*.

Neither the Upanishads nor the Gita portray any consistent view of the universe or the Reality. In these scriptures other views have been propounded along with the concept of Brahman as the Ultimate Truth. Shankara took pains to reconcile such statements and assertions in the holy texts that seemed to him opposed to each other.

According to Shankara, as long as we fail to identify individual self with the Universal Self known as *Nirguna Brahmana* we shall continue to be deluded by the mysterious power of *maya* (illusion) or *avidya* (ignorance) which causes suffering and errors. We can achieve *moksha* (liberation) when we realise that *jivatman* (individual self) and *Parmatman* (Universal Self) are one and the same. Brahman is described is *sat-chid-anand* (existence, knowledge and bliss). It is self—luminous, unconditioned existence and unexcellable bliss : It is the Real of all reals.

In advancing his doctrines, Shankara was motivated by a desire for the reestablishment of Brahminism which object could be achieved by refutation of Buddhism and Jainism, particularly the former. He was an ideologist of Brahminical reaction and patriarchal sacerdotal society.

Tilak says that for the second time[6] in the *Kaliyuga* (Corrupt Age) it was Shankaracharya who worked for the protection of religion contained in *shrutis* and *smritis* and gave currency to the Vedic doctrine and cult of asceticism. "Shankaracharya was a super man and a great sage and he had by his brilliant intellectual power refuted the Jain and the Buddhistic doctrines which had gained ground on all sides and established his own non-dualistic (*advaita*) doctrines."[7]

It was, however, not an easy task for Shankara to meet the penetrating arguments of the rationalists. In the case of those who believed in God but differed from him, Shankara invoked the authority of the scriptures to maintain his ground. He looked upon the Upanishads as the authoritative explanation of the doctrines contained in the Vedas. The self cannot be proved, he said, since it is the basis of all proof and is established prior to proof ; one can doubt everything but one cannot doubt oneself. He described the world as *anivarchaniya* (indescribable) or indeterminable in terms of the real and the unreal.

Shankara examined different philosophies in his own way and came to the conclusion that every one except his own had shortcomings. He even admitted that his own doctrine of Brahman could not be proved logically. The nature of the soul or theory of rebirth, he said, cannot be held by reason because all human thought lead into a blind alley at a certain stage. This induced him to invent the doctrine of *maya*. Since the *shrutis* had contended that Brahman alone is the truth, Shankara could contend that universe is an illusion", observes L.S. Joshi. "Thus the doctrine of Maya enunciated by Shankara is a result of critical reason accepting its defeat. It is the logical culmination of the Hindu philosophy which could not break the intellectual vicious circle."[8]

Curbing of rational faculty as a way to liberation in Shankara's system is evident from a number of poems entitled *pratah-samarnam stotram* (morning meditations) which the philosopher composed and asked his followers to study and repeat daily without necessarily understanding their purport. The verses contained assertions like "I am not born", "For me there is no death", "I am neither male, nor female, nor am I sexless," "I am the Blessed Peaceful One who is the cause of origin and dissolution of the world" etc. The verses were monotonous and "directed against scepticism and wordly logic." Heinrich Zimmer commenting on the meditations says :

> "Such a holy megalomania goes past the bounds of sense. With Shankara, the grandeur of the supreme human

> experience becomes intellectualised and reveals its inhuman sterility. The stanzas are to be memorised and meditated upon; one is to become imbued with the attitude that they instill. Their mind-destroying paradox boldly stated, endlessly repeated, is an instrument of guidance to the distant shore of transcendental peace."[9]

Though this method of winning the blind believer was successful it was of no avail in debates with the rationalist materialist.

So highly developed and intellectually powerful were the rationalist materialist schools with which Shankara combated that, whenever he tried to refute their arguments logically, he was compelled to take up an essentially materialistic position. Drawing upon certain verses of the Gita, he developed pantheistic monism declaring that everything in the universe was Brahman. It was the last shelter in which he was driven to take refuge. But the extreme form of pantheism is nothing but inverted materialism, it is the defeat of idealism as a philosophy.

In order to prove the reality of Brahman which is simply assumed and which by its very nature cannot be proved, Shankara declared the provable and perceptible existence of the world as illusory. His Brahman is destitute of all qualities and has no attribute. Yet the Brahman is associated with a certain power called *avidya* or *maya* which is the cause of all appearances of the universe. Here is the glaring contradiction in the Advaita Vedanta philosophy. Is the *maya* "Being or non-Being?" It cannot be called "Being" for "Being" (Sat) is only Brahman. At the same time it cannot be called "non-Being" for it produces the appearance of the world. Maya stands as a parallel power to Brahman. Shankara's doctrine of Brahman as a unitary and absolute existence is contradicted; idealistic monism falls to the ground.

The unreality of the phenomenal world is the fundamental dogma of the Vedanta system. But in order to fight the idealistic school of Mahayana Buddhism, Shankara had virtually to disown his own philosophy and make declarations contradicting it. He expounded the purely materialistic theory of cognition. He said: "The non-existence of eternal things cannot be main-

tained because we are conscious of eternal things. Why should we pay attention to a man who affirms that no external thing exists. That the outward thing exists apart from consciousness has necessarily to be accepted on the ground of the nature of consciousness. Nobody when perceiving a post or a wall, is conscious of his perception only : but all men are conscious of posts and walls as objects of their perception...The variety of mental impressions is caused altogether by the variety of external things perceived. This apparent world whose existence is guaranteed by all the means of knowledge, cannot be denied."[10]

In his introduction to the *Brahma Sutras* Shankara stressed that "belief must be consumated in indubitable experience. *Jnana* (knowledge) ends in direct experience and relates to an already existing reality. Reality is manufactured neither by belief nor by religion." Though the Upanishads were frequently quoted as authority by him while debating with orthodox opponents, to meet the rationalists, he declared : "Certainly *shruti* cannot be an authority as against observed facts. Even if hundreds of Vedic texts declare that fire is cold and devoid of light they cannot become authority on this point." Commenting on these statements M.N. Roy observes : "Here Shankarcharya is combatting his whole philosophy ; once the issues are joined on the philosophical ground, the triumph inevitably goes to materialism."[11]

By arguments which demolished his own thesis, Shankara fought against materialistic monism to set up the systems of Advaita Vedanta. But it brought him very close to Mahayana. The force of *avidya* accounting for the phenomenal world is admitted by both Nagarjuna and Shankara. The Mayavad is another name for phenomenalism of the Mahayana Buddhist for both break up the world into a panorama of abstractions. Shankara draws distinction between *param artha* (Absolute Truth) and *vyavhara* (empirical truth) in the same way as the Buddhist. Nor is the conception of *moksha* in Advaita Vedanta of Shankara any different from the Buddhist view of nirvana. Not for nothing do his Vedantist opponents call Shankara a crypto-Buddhist who adopted thinly disguised materialistic attitude in his debates with the rationalists to establish idealistic

monism. "It is evident," says M.N. Roy, "how powerful was the current of materialist thought which influenced the spiritual life of ancient India for nearly a thousand years, until the downfall of Buddhism."[12]

It is puzzling that with all his emphasis on non-dualism and belief in *atman* (soul) and *parmatman* (Universal soul) being one and the same, Shankara should have composed songs in which he differentiated between the two and preached *bhakti marga* (path of devotion) as a way to moksha. "He was not only a supreme scholastic scholar", says Zimmer, "but a remarkable religious poet as well. His stanzas praising the Goddess (*Shakti-Maya-Devi*) are among the most celebrated and reveal a surprising aspect of his spirituality for though he dismissed *maya* in his philosophical writings and goes relentlessly beyond to the ineffable transcendancy of Brahman, the "One without the second", here he gives devout praise to the "second"—Maya, Mother of the World—and with all sincerety, expressing the mode of divine dualistic experience on the plane of bhakti, where the devotee regards and understands himself as the creature and servant of the deity in human-form."[13]

Neither Shankaracharya's reformist zeal nor his tendentious reinterpretation of scriptures to suit the purpose of fighting adversaries of Brahminism, mostly Buddhists and atheists, was looked upon with favour by the orthodox sections. His re-orientation of Gita doctrines and Upanishadic monism was contested. He was denounced as an apostate and shunned. When his mother died no Brahmin was prepared to perform the obsequies and the broken-hearted monk had single-handed to hack the corpse and cremate it ; a doleful tale indeed of a savant who produced the philosophical systems which was to become a prized-possession of the later-day Brahmins and serve as the foundation of contemporary Hindu religion.

Nevertheless, it must be recognised that whatever methods he utilised and however he functioned, Shankaracharya was eminently successful in striking the final blow to vanquish Buddhism from the country of its birth. He stands out as a notable milestone in the path of progress of the Vedanta school of philosophy. Untiring in work, devoted to his mission, intelligent and energetic, he boldly faced opposition and earned

the admiration of even his opponents. His style was persuasive and forceful : his personality imposing. He travelled far and wide in India meeting philosophers, scholars, reformers and defeated most of them in debates. He gained many disciples and established four *maths* (sanctuaries) under able teachers (also called Shankaracharyas) in different parts of the country at Sringeri (Mysore), Puri (Orissa), Dwarka (Gujarat), and Badrinath (in the Himalayas) as centres for propagation of his cult. The initiative in the reform of Brahminism thus taken grew into a powerful movement which continued to spread even after Shankara passed away in 820 A.C., and has survived to this day. What has come down to us as the most authoritative and representative Hindu Philosophy is the creation of Adi (first) Shankaracharya. As Richard Garbe states : "Nearly all educated Hindus in modern India, except in so far as they have embraced European ideas are adherents of the Vedanta ; and three fourths of these accept Shankara's interpretation of the *Brahma Sutras*, while the rest are divided among the varying explanations of the system offered by one or other of the remaining commentators."[14]

Over three hundred years after the death of Shankara, was born in 1175 A.C., another stalwart, Ramanuja, at Kanchipuram in the South. He was a pupil of the Advaita philosopher, Yadava Prakash, who initiated him into the profundities of idealistic monism. But Ramanuja felt dissatisfied with it and found solace in the teachings of the *bhakti marga.* Like Shankara, he wrote *bhashyas* (commentaries) on the *Upanishads* the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, but entered into a heated controversy with the former regarding the underlying aim of the prasthana trayi. He was of the opinion that "the doctrines of illusion (maya) and non-dualism laid down by Shankara were erroneous and that although three principles of consciousness—soul (*jiva*,) cosmos (*jagat*) and God (*Ishvara*) were independent, yet in as much as *jiva* which is *chit* (conscious) and the cosmos which is *achit* (unconscious) formed the body of *Ishvara*, the *chit-achit* bodied *Ishvara* was one and one alone, and out of this subtle *chit* and *achit* in the body of *Ishvara* the gross *chit* and the gross *achit* or the numerous forms of life and the cosmos came into existence later on."[15]

Ramanuja strongly refutes the postulate of Shankara that the distinction between subject and object is a relative one in so far as the real is only one, undifferentiated Brahman or pure Consciousness devoid of subject-object dichotomy. Disputing this view Ramanuja holds that the self is everlasting ego for the very nature of consciousness testified to the existence of a permanent thinking individual which is distinct from other objects.

Ramanuja does not deny that jiva and Brahman are identical but he also believes that one is not the other and difference obtains between them. This difference according to him, is not ordinary but real, natural and eternal God is superior and always remains superior to the soul even in the liberated state and therefore man has always to revere, worship and adore Him. Strictly following the *bhakti yoga* doctrine of the Gita, Ramanuja says that the highest knowledge, the highest devotion and the highest activity of man is parapti—complete surrender to Ishvara. He generally interprets *jnana* (knowledge) in the prasthana trayi to mean *dhyana* (meditation) and *nididhyasana* (concentrated contemplation). In his philosophy moksha is no doubt union with God but it does in no way connote disappearance or merging of self with the Universal Self. It is only release from the limiting barriers which the self suffers in the state of bondage. These barriers are removed but there is no vanishing of self for that would be tantamount to destruction of real self. "Shankara's Absolute", says Dr. Nagaraja Rao, "is regarded by Ramanuja as a metaphysical monster. Such a conception is declared as no better than void.[16]

Ramanuja concentrated his attention on the problem of relation which the world should have with God. He posed three reals—God, Soul and Matter—not independent reals separate from each other, but reals nevertheless. The three are, in his view, inseparable and form a complex whole which constitutes Brahman. He argues that God is real and independent and that soul and other objects in the pluralistic world are also real in the same sense but their reality is utterly dependent on God. Evidently there is much in Ramanuja's teaching that is logically inexplicable and must be taken on faith alone. It

has come to be called as *Vishishta Advaita* (Qualified Monism) in the Vedanta Philosophy.

Big changes had taken place in the cultural and political life of the Indian people during the three centuries which intervened between the death of Shankara and the birth of Ramanuja. Buddhism had completely disappeared and Rationalism had fallen on bad days. Neo-Brahminism was marching triumphant across the land and there was no effective force to challenge it any longer. The Indian subcontinent had been fragmented by the warring chiefs and parts of it were gradually passing into the hands of the invading foreigners. It was the rule of the cruel and ruthless monarchs and there was all-round misery, destruction and helplessness. Self-confidence had been shattered and the fight against odds was unavailing.

In such a mental climate there was no need to countenance the philosophy of pure Reason or pseudo-wisdom to grapple with the materialists, heretics and atheists. The new social and political developments were in need of philosophy of surrender before absolute power (be it spiritual or temporal) to justify it and therefore the *bhakti yoga* of the Gita got precedence over other cults and complete submission to God, the readily acceptable creed of the people.

Ramanuja is the fountain-head of Hindu theism. Significantly, he declared that the sin of man consists in affirming his own autonomy, independence and self-sufficiency; it is nothing but ruinous self-pride.

The man must know, asserted the reformer, that he is God-created and wholly depends on Him.

Ramanuja died in 1250 A.C.

In 1197 A.C. was born Madhva, another star in the Vedanta firmament, who disputed the interpretation of both Shankara and Ramanuja which they put on the prasthana trayi. He is also known as Anand Tirtha and lived in the village Belle, in the Kanara district. He attacked Ramanuja for being inconsistent and contradictory in his views. According to the Madhva, *jivatman* (Soul) and *Parmatman* (Universal Soul) must be looked upon as eternally different from each other ; there can never be any unity, whether partial or total, between them.

For this reason the school started by Madhva is known as the *dvaita* (dualistic) school of Vedanta.

Like his two prodecessors, Madhva also drew inspiration from the *Upanishads*, the *Brahma Sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. He entertains no doubt that these sacred texts support his theory of *dvaita*. He has no use for *jnana marga* (path of knowledge). He taught that desireless work extolled in the Gita is only a means to reach an ideal but devotion is the ultimate and real goal of life. Having become perfect by following the path of devotion it is just the same whether one performs any action or not. Madhva dispensed with monism. Those passages in the Gita in which abandonment of fruit of action is declared as superior to meditation on Ishavara but are not in accord with his own doctrine of dvaita were explained away by Madhva as being expletive and unimportant.

Consistent with his theory, Madhva says that God and soul are eternally separate, eternally different and *moksha* consists in the self taking delight in adoration and worship of Ishvara and in remaining perpetually individual and distinct from Him. The Divine Will can set men free or cast them into bondage.

Madhva says that the Brahman as described by Shankara was no different from the *shunya* (void) of the Buddhists. He frequently accuses Shankara of being a Buddhist in disguise and even calls him an atheist. Madhva claimed that Lord Vishnu had commissioned him to correctly interpret the prasthana trayi so that a secure path may be opened for men to arrive at the goal.

The *dvaita* school of Vedanta rejects the theory of maya. The world according to them is real and not illusory ; but Madhva cautions that real is not permanent. The world is an objective fact, a datum. He argues that if the world were unreal its creator, God, must be no better than a juggler. Madhva's writings repudiate Shankara at every step and makes out a charge sheet against the advaita philosophy bitterly criticising it from a to z.

In the fifteenth century (C. 1479 A.C.) was born Vallabha who disagreed with both the vishisht advaita and dvaita schools and seems to have been inclinded to Advaita Vedanta but had

certain differences with Shankara. Vallabha accepted the doctrine that when *jivatman* (consciousness ego) was free from the influence of *avidya* (ignorance) and unblinded by maya, he was not distinct from Brahman. But he differed from Shankara by making some points : first, the various souls are but particles of Ishvara like sparks of fire and every spark is not whole fire ; secondly, cosmos though illusory is not *mithya* (unreal) and that illusion is a force which has separated itself from Ishvara by His desire ; thirdly the jivatman which has subjected itself to illusion cannot get knowledge necessary for getting the release except by divine pleasure. Vallabha thought that by expressing these differences he had purified the philosophy of Shankara and therefore his system is called Shuddha Advaita (Pure-Non-dualism). It is also called *Pushti Marga.* The central figure in the philosophy of Vallabha is no doubt Brahman. But it is not the *nirguna* Brahman of Shankara's Advaita school. It now assumes the form of supreme personality and as the most perfect person. He continues to be called *sat-chit anand* (existence—knowledge-bliss). But while describing the Brahman Vallabha presents Him with merits and qualities of a full-blooded theistic deity. Even monistic metaphysics is pressed into service to build Brahman into this shape.

However, these differences instead of influencing the Shankara's system pushed Vallabha headlong into the camp of Bhakti Marga. In his commentary on the Gita, Vallabha concedes that the Blessed Lord after first teaching to Arjuna the Samkhya doctrines and path of desireless work ultimately made him perfect by treating him with the nectar of philosophy of devotion ; therefore, devotion is the most important doctrine of the Gita, which he contends, is obvious from the final advice of Sri Krishna in the words; "Give up all other dharmas and surrender yourself to me, alone." Thus it is evident that in spite of his leaning towards intellectualism, Vallabha could not help responding to the social and political conditions prevailing in the fifteenth century India.

During the medieval period of Indian history scores of saints and reformers appeared in different parts of the country. Some of them like Jnaneshvara, Nimbalkar, Chaitanya, Kabir, Ramananda and Nanak became popular. One and all, they

taught devotion and surrender to God as the only path to liberation from the miseries of rebirth and the world. Of the three paths propounded in the Bhagavad-Gita, significantly the most popular in the medieval period and till the end of eighteenth century was the bhakti marga (path of devotion).

Disunited, fallen victim to countless social evils, politically enslaved, morally degraded, ruled either by petty local tyrants or by merciless foreign despots, the Hindus lay prostrate. They found safety in total submission to temporal masters. The bhakti marga had glamour and attraction for the helpless, downtrodden, dehumanised millions. It was the spiritual reflection of the social conditions prevailing at the time.

23

Emergence of Hinduism

NOTHING succeeds like success. To the amazement of orthodox Brahmins who compelled Sri Krishna and Arjuna to virtually disclaim their authorship of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and to produce *Anu-Gita*, while the former poem with all its demerits went from strength to strength, the latter though applauded, was cast into oblivion by indifference of the thoughtful Indians. Shrewd as ever, the Brahmins lost no time in utilizing the popularity of the *Bhagavad-Gita* to their advantage. They began to discover that the core of Brahminism, the basic tenets of Vedic religion, the profundities of Upanishadic philosophy and the cardinal principles of *dharmashastras* were incorporated in the Gita philosophy. The poem could effectively deal with the opposition and best serve their purpose. It was therefore, accorded the dignity and sanctity of a scripture. Being handy, brief and lucid, the Gita soon excelled other sacred texts and occupied an unequalled position in the Indian religious lore. It became the manual of neo-Brahminism which gradually assumed the shape of what is now known as Hinduism.[1]

What the Bible is to the Christians and the Quran to the Muslims, the Bhagavad-Gita is to the Hindus. The verses of the sacred poem are being recited for at least the past twelve centuries at important events in a Hindu's life. The historian Kalhana says that King Avanti Verman (ninth century) of

Kashmir got the whole poem read to him at the hour of his death as early as 883 A.C.[2] Other historical instances can be quoted as testimony of the poem's increasing popularity. Today the Gita is held in the highest veneration and there is no private or public Hindu function when its select verses are not recited to lend sanctity and solemnity to the occasion. When a Hindu witness in a court of law or anywhere else is asked to swear that he will speak the truth, it is the Gita and no other scripture which is placed in his hands. Sister Nivedita (born Margaret Noble 1867-1911), well known disciple of Swami Vivekananda, appropriately described the Gita as "the blood of India's blood and the bone of her bone". It is not possible to understand the essence of Hindu ideals, morality and outlook as well as the conduct, behaviour and mental make-up of the Hindus, individually or collectively, unless the Gita and the literature which has grown around it is carefully studied. "There is no other work", says B.G. Tilak, "in the whole of Sanskrit literature, which explains the principles of the present Hindu religion in as succinct and yet as clear and unambiguous a manner as the Gita."[3] This view may be supplemented by what another modern scholar Dr. G.S. Khair says : "If there is any one book which has influenced most of the mind of India, it is the Bhagavad-Gita. The elite of India as well as the common man, are directly and indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, influenced by the Divine Song. All great men, outstanding writers, philosophers, and saints are influenced by the Gita, and through them the masses have imbibed the important teachings and truths of the poem."[4]

The teachings and the truths of the Gita have been closely examined. It remains to ascertain what influence the holy poem has exerted on its votaries. It is not the scripture alone which has been at work in this direction but also the personality of Sri Krishna who imparted the Gita philosophy to the Indians and the huge mass of other literature produced to amplify it and recognized as authoritative and sacred, which has to be considered to form a fair and balanced view of the Hindu society.

In the Gita, we read the Blessed Lord telling Arjuna "whatever a great man does, what the standard he sets, the world

follows."[5]

It would not be unfair if we glean from the life story of Sri Krishna, the greatest leader of all ages, what his standard of morality was which he set up by personal example to be followed by the people.

The Gita is a part of the celebrated Mahabharata. In the Epic are related a number of events connected with the life of Sri Krishna which throw a ray of light on certain aspects of his moral code.

In the course of the Mahabharata war, which was fought at Sri Krishna's instigation, some conspiracies were hatched. It is striking that all these emanate from the Blessed Lord who claims to be incarnation of Vishnu, the highest god, and as the ideal and prototype of every virtue. "At every single crisis of the war, his (Krishna's) advice wins the day by the crookedest of the means", observes D.D. Kosambi, "which could never have occurred to others. To kill Bhishma, Shikhandin was used as a living shield against whom that perfect knight would not raise a weapon, because of doubtful sex. Drona was polished off while stunned by the deliberately false report of his son's death. Karna was shot down against all rules of chivalry when dismounted and unarmed. Duryodhana was bludgeoned to death after a foul mace blow that shattered his thigh. This is by no means the complete list of inequities."[6]

When Drona spread fear and destruction in the Pandava army by his relentless attacks, notes C. Rajagopalachari, Sri Krishna told Arjuna, "there is none that can defeat this Drona, fighting according to the strict rules of war. We cannot cope with him unless dharma is discarded. We have no other way open. There is but one thing that will make him desist from fighting. If he hears that (his son) Ashwasthama is dead Drona will lose all interest in life and throw down his weapons. Some one must therefore tell Drona that Ashwasthama has been slain." Rajagopalachari remarks that "Arjuna shrank in horror at the proposal (of Sri Krishna) as he could not bring himself to tell a lie ; for no one was minded to be a party to deceit."[7] But ultimately the Blessed Lord prevailed upon Yudhishthira to perform the shameful deed.

In similar manner, Sri Krishna instigated Bhima who was engaged in single combat with Duryodhana to disregard the laws of war and strike the latter on the thighs which alone could kill him. Reporting this incident, C. Rajagopalachari says :

> "When the war was nearing its end, Balarama (Brother of Sri Krishna) arrived at Kurukshetra after completing his tour to holy places. He came just when Bhima and Duryodhana were engaged in their last mortal combat. He saw Bhima aiming the deadly blow which broke Duryodhana's thighs, and his anger flamed up at this great breach of the rules of single combat.
> Fie upon you all ; would any kshatriya hit below the navel : This Bhima has offended the law most disgracefully, he exclaimed, and impatiently going up to his brother Krishna, shouted, 'you can look on and tolerate all this, but I cannot bear to see such unclean fighting."[8]

Duryodhana with his face glowing like a blazing fire with anger and hatred, writes Rajagopalachari, accused the Blessed Lord in these words : "By base tricks you contrived the death of warriors, who fought bravely according to the laws of war. You could not have dreamt of victory in fair fight with Karna or Bhishma or Drona. Have you not a spark of shame left ?"[9]

For these treacheries, Sri Krishna had no defence beyond saying that the war could not be won without them. Not surprisingly, Gandhari, mother of the slaughtered Kauravas, turned with angry words to the Blessed Lord and reproached him for not preventing the war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. She then pronounced a curse upon Sri Krishna that after thirty-six years he shall cause the destruction of his own race and that he himself shall perish miserably in the wilderness. It came true in due course.

King Bhishmaka of Vidarbha had promised to give his daughter Rukmani in marriage to Prince Shishupal but when the wedding was to be celebrated Sri Krishna appeared on the scene with his brother Balarama and kidnapped the bride. Later at another festival, on a flimsy excuse Sri Krishna beheaded Shishupal who rightly bore a grudge against him.

The marriage of Sri Krishna with Rukmani took place in Dwarka. With her he begets ten sons, but later marries seven

queens and sixteen thousand cowherdesses (gopis) who are already married to other men.

These episodes in the life of the propounder of the Gita philosophy have been related here because they play not an inconsiderable part in the formation of Hindu character. Indeed, they are as important as the holy doctrines in the construction of practical life of a Hindu.

The typical commentaries on the Gita by the great *acharyas* (teachers) which have left their impress on Hindu mind have been examined in the last chapter. Both the Gita itself and the principal commentaries have been subject of study by the educated and sophisticated classes. The common people learnt and continue to learn the core of the teachings from them. But before long triumphant Brahmins produced easily comprehensible literature which elaborated and elucidated the Gita doctrines with undisguised sacerdotal slant for the guidance of the less educated and the illiterate lower classes. It consisted of *tantras* and the *puranas* which made full use of fables and parables to explain the philosophy to the masses.

The word *tantra* is dervied from the root *tan* "to spread" and the agential prefix *tra* "to save", meaning that knowledge which is spread to save. It denotes that body of religious literature which is stated to have been revealed to Shiva as a specific scripture for the present dark age (*kaliyuga*). They are without authorship for they are claimed to have been revealed by divine inspiration to *rishis.*

A tantra is generally cast in the form of a dialogue between Shiva and his consort, Parvati. "Together they form the three principal divisions of modern Hinduism, namely Shaivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism", says Bernard. "They are considered as the outstanding religious system of India. Numerous schools have stemmed from each of these."

In the tantric literature the sublime and the ridiculous are closely interwoven. In it while on the one hand we come across some lofty ideas about religion and profound philosophical speculations, we meet with the wildest superstitions and vulgar sentiments unfit to be expressed by any cultured author. *Tantras* contain, says the nationalist historian, H.D. Bhattacharya, along with sublime truths, rigorous discipline and

catholic outlook, unmeaning jargon, mysterious mummery, veiled and open obscenity and revolting antinomianism. It is a strange mixture of higher and lower thoughts of strenuous discipline and moral laxity; of sound understanding and primitive credulity."[10] Side by side with a faultless social code of morality and rigid asceticism, we see a cult disfigured by wild orgies inculcating extremely reprehensible morals."[11] But basically the authors of tantras and puranas do not deviate from the doctrines of prasthana trayi and therefore these books became part and parcel of Hinduism when it was finally evolved into its present shape.

The main puranas are eighteen in number but there are many more *upa-puranas*. Their chief feature is glaring contradictions and confusion in contents and boundless exaggerations in their expression. For instance, while to start with there was only one hell in Brahmin literature where sinners were lodged after death for punishment, earlier puranas invented seven hells. Then the *Bhagavad-Purana* went a little further saying that there are a hundred thousand of hells; and the *Garuda Purana* counted no less than 8,40,00,00 of them. There is no balance and no moderation in the statements of the puranas.[12] Whether they are about this world or the next, about sex, morality, asceticism, yogic powers or any matter conceivable under the sun, the puranas vie with each other in making limitless exaggerations. "Neither the Puranas nor the Tantras make enjoyable reading", remarks Winternitz, "and this is much more applicable to the latter. They are the work of inferior writers, and are often written in barbarous and ungrammatical Sanskrit. On the other hand neither the literary historian nor the student of religion can afford to pass them by in silence; *for during centuries and even at the present time these writings are the spiritual food of Indians* (emphasis mine)."[13]

The *Mahabharata*, venerated as the fifth Veda by the Hindus, contains the moral philosophy as drawn from the Gita doctrines. Having stated how a moral man should behave, Bhishma, the great preceptor of the age, was asked by king Yudhishthira as to "what course of conduct should be adopted by a politician in distress." The old *guru* gave a detailed reply

recorded in the twelth book of the Epic, part of which is worthy of note :

> "The last word of social wisdom is, never trust" (12-80-12)
> "Whoever desires success in this world must be prepared to make deep bows, swear love and friendship, speak humbly, and pretend to shed and wipe away tears. (12-140-17)
> "Might is above right ; right proceeds from might, right has its support in might, as living beings in the soil. As smoke follows the wind, so right must follow might. Right in itself is devoid of command ; it leans on might as the creeper on the tree.
> "Right is in the hands of the strong ; nothing is impossible to the strong, Everything is pure that comes from the strong". (12-134-5-7)
> "When thou findest thyself in a low state, try to lift thyself up, resorting to pious as well as to cruel actions. Before practicing morality wait until thou art strong. (12-140-38)
> "If thou art not prepared to be cruel and to kill men as the fisher kills the fish, abandon every hope of great success". (12-140-39).[14]

Though Bhishma warned that these means would not be called righteous and are only to be employed during the period of distress, it would seem that the precepts have been followed more than the ones recommended for better and prosperous days in fact they became an inalienable part of Hindu character. Maybe this was so, because after the Mahabharata War, India remained in perpetual distress till the modern times.

Apart from the teachings of the Gita and the standard of morality set by the conquerors of the Mahabharata War, it is the religious literature produced in the medieval times which has governed for many centuries and continues to govern today the behaviour of the Hindus. "The Vedas are studied by the antiquarian, the Upanishads by the philosopher", says N. Mukhopadhyay, "but every orthodox Hindu must have some knowledge of the puranas, directly or vicariously, to shape his conduct and to perform the duties essential to his worldly and spiritual welfare."[15]

We need not discuss the various features of Hinduism in detail but it must have been noted by the reader that the author

of the Gita finally succeeded where others before him had failed in defeating progressive forces and in re-establishing the sacerdotal superiority by professing to be a revolutionist and by raising slogans to that effect, while remaining steadfast in undermining the rationalist beliefs and traditions. Slogan-mongering became a characteristic feature of all subsequent Hindu exegetic literature and, in fact, of the Hinduism itself.

The human virtues like rational thinking, love of truth, tolerance for dissent, kindness towards all living being, respect for individual personality and dignity, urge for freedom, yearning for social justice, and hatred of greed and meanness which were fostered during the mellinium of Buddhist Revolution continue to be cherished by the Hindus ; indeed, they believe that no other community in the world possess them so well as they. Nevertheless, after the ascendancy of neo-Brahminism these values have assumed the form of mere slogans and are honoured more in breach than in observance.

True to the Gita-style, a Hindu is behind no one else in supporting the lofty principles and passionately outpaces by profession even the most advanced progressives anywhere. But in his dealings with others, whoever they be, he fails to go beyond the limits set by the most popular scripture. This drives a fair critic to the conclusion that as long as a Hindu is a Hindu in spirit or by faith he can neither be an intellectual nor a revolutionary worth the name.

Excepting that the Gita is in essence a manual of neo-Brahminism which stresses the necessity of cherishing blind faith in a Personal God, the sacred poem does not provide any clear guidance for human life. "The conglomerate Gita philosophy might provide a loophole for innovation" says Kosambi, "but never the analytical tools necessary to make a way out of the social impasse."[16] Considered in its entirety, the Gita can be and has been a source of confusion to its votaries because it supports by turns views contradictory to each other and does not discard the beliefs which had become outmoded and anachronistic and, what is worse, positively harmful.

To the astonishment of others, a Hindu can gulp down painlessly sharp inconsistencies in his thought and behaviour. Contemporary Hindu philosophers and savants have glorified

this peculiarity of their exegetic literature and claimed the uniqueness of their philosophy on that account. "Numerous contradictions (in the Gita) have been pointed out", writes Heinrich Zimmer, "by the Western critics, yet to the Indian mind these contradictions are precisely the value. For they represent the beginning of the great *rapprochement* and, besides, are readily resolved, by realisation of the one in all."[17]

Justifying the hotch-potch philosophy, Dr. Radhakrishnan remarks : "Hinduism developed an attitude of comprehensive charity instead of a fanatical faith in an inalienable creed. It accepted the multiplicity of the aboriginal gods and others which originated, most of them, outside the Aryan tradition, and justified them all. It brought together into one whole all believers in God. Many sects professing many different beliefs live within the Hindu fold."[18] At another place the philosopher-politician adds : "Hinduism is a way of life rather than a form of thought. While it gives absolute liberty in the world of thought it enjoins a strict code of practice. The theist and the atheist, the sceptic and the agnostic may all be Hindus if they accept the Hindu system of culture and life."[19]

Similar explanations have been offered by other Hindu savants. "It is a fundamental postulate of Hindu thought", writes K.M. Panikkar, "that every way of life has its contribution to make to human welfare. It is this positive approach to other groups and communities, this convinced eschewal of the doctrine—that one's way is right—which gives to the Indian doctrine of toleration its especial significance."[20] This captivating interpretation of the Hindu culture as developed in the teachings of the Gita and the religious literature which was produced after it, is the usual theme of Western educated but orthodox Hindu scholars. "A man may not believe in God and still call himself a Hindu", says Panikkar,[21] "Hinduism is the continuous synthesis of ideas."[22] "It has universal outlook and it is a relentless pursuit after truth."[23] Acclaiming the superiority of the Vedanta over all philosophies, C. Rajagopalachari says : It is not necessary to build a new religion. In India we have a religion and a philosophy (the Vedanta) attached to it,

as old as civilization itself which is remarkably consistent with science as well as politics."[24]

Now these vehement assertions of Hindu scholars are far from truth and certainly not borne out by facts. As we have seen the Gita gives no quarter to sceptics ("A sceptic is doomed to destruction") nor to the atheists ("godless sink into lower depths" and "I ever throw them into demoniacal wombs"). Sri Krishna repeatedly says in the dialogues that those who do not agree with him cannot attain peace and will be utterly destroyed. What, therefore, the contemporary Hindu thinkers want the world to believe is neither true to facts nor fair to the author of the Gita.

Curiously, however, Dr. Radhakrishnan could not help, despite his bombastic claims, stating that the Hindu religion is basically static and unprogressive. "Though Hindu religious thought has traversed" says he, "many revolutions and made great conquests, the essential ideas have continued the same for four or five millenniums. The general conceptions are contained to Vedanta standard."[25]

Professing to repose faith in the Supreme God of the Vedanta, a Hindu worships millions of gods and goddesses which have ever remained alive in the Brahmin pantheon. He can also worship animals, trees, stones, rivers and mountains as manifestation of the gods. His life from birth to funeral is regulated by Vedic and Puranic rituals and led at every step by Brahmin priests whom he dare not dispense with. Directed by superstitions and dogmas inherited from ancient times, he frequently depends on astrologers and diviners to tell him about auspicious time and day to make a move in any sphere of social or private life.

If soul is not killed and is everlasting what does it matter if body is tortured, mutilated, mangled or annihilated. The Hindu religion justifies and allows any heinous crime while shrugging off the consequences. There can be no standard of morality and no set rules to regulate human relationship.

A society which has *tapas* (self-torture) as an ideal of life and counts a *tapasvi* (self-torturer) as a spiritually gifted person

worthy of emulation cannot but be cruel, callous and indifferent to human suffering.

To believe that world is an illusion and at the same time amass wealth by hook or crook for luxurious living cannot but make one hypocritical without being conscious of it. As Ronald Segal observes : "The official who wears a Gandhi cap and practises simplicity may be nourishing his bank account with bribes but if he recognises the inconsistency, he sees no reason to abandon it. It is right to secure one's family for the future. Some times there are months between conflicting acts, sometimes there is hardly a comma."[26]

Professing noblest ideals of justice, truth, morality and fairplay, regard for reason and respect for the humblest life, a Hindu not infrequently displays baffling intolerance totally incompatible with the lofty principles.

Belief alike in monotheism, polytheism, in non-dual Brahman and a Personal God, in *karma*, rebirth and caste ; faith in the power of *yajna*, *mantra* and *tapas* as well as various superstitions, dogmas, traditions and tenets as taught in the Gita and other exegetic literature have become parts of the Hindu culture exerting deep influence on Hindu character. There is no Hindu, educated or illiterate, wealthy or poor, sophisticated or simple-minded, who does not share all the accumulated traits of the culture in more or less degree. This has made the Hindu a complicated being, an oddity, a riddle difficult for non-Hindus to understand.

Narrow minded and degrading casteism can be practised side by side with making loud professions of humanism. While maintaining to see Brahman (Universal Self and the Ultimate Reality) in every body, the Hindus, barring small sections of Western educated classess, hate *malechhas* (non-Hindus), look down upon women and despise untouchables. "It is not Buddha", said Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, "who, as is often alleged, weakened Hindu society by his gospel of non-violence. It is the Brahminic theory of *chaturvarnya* (four caste system) that has been responsible not only for the defeat but also for the decay of Hindu society...Is there any society in the world which has unapproachables, unshadowables and unseeables ?[27]

In the name of esoteric yoga practices, Hindu society has been turned into a fertile ground for their activities by imposters who claim to possess super human powers and play on the credulity of the people. The *Gita* doctrines of *avatar* (incarnation of God as man) and of *vishwarup* (World Appearance) as the highest attainments of a true devotee, gave impetus to the spread of the Godman cult. Donning the holy robes of ascetics, innumerable cheats and rogues roam about by the thousand and are welcomed and revered by the Hindu throughout the length and breadth of the land.

That is not all ; many men and women with deranged minds and even completely out of wits who babble meaningless words and make crude, vulgar and obscene, if not also violent, gesticulations attain sainthood. Both educated and illiterate Hindus with weak minds read what they desire in the gibberish and gestures, and there upon worship the lunatics as gifted beings. I have personally known about a dozen such men and women who had control over their senses due to physical ailments and were declared stark mad becoming *mahatmas* in the eyes of the Hindus, not a few of the devotees being scientists and scholars.

In a startlingly frank language, the medieval Maratha saint, Jnaneshvara, while commenting on the thirteenth canto of the Gita, revealed the truth in describing the Hindu oddity. Though he made the observations in regard to a Maratha peasant, they are appropriately applicable to a Hindu anywhere in India :

> The peasant sets up cult after cult according to convenience. He follows the preacher who seems most impressive for the moment and learns his mystic formula...Harsh to the living, he relies heavily on stones and images, but even then never lives true to anyone of them. He will have Krishna's image made, established in the corner of the house, and then go off on pilgrimage to some god or other. He will pray to Krishna daily but worship the tutelary deity at need, and other gods as well, each at the particular auspicious moment. He founds Krishna's cult but makes vows to others, on anniversary days he is devoted to ancestral Manes. The worship he gives to

> Krishna on eleventh (day of the fortnight) is no more than that he renders to the sacred cobra on the fifth. He is devoted solely to Ganesha on the fourth ; on the fourteenth says he : 'Mother Durga I am yours alone'. During the nine nights (Nav Durga) he will recite the set praise of Chandi, serve meals outdoors on Sunday and rush off on Monday with a *bel* fruit offering to Shiva's phallic symbol. Thus he prays unremittingly, never still for a moment, like a prostitute at the town-gate."[28]

When a strong dose of self-criticism would be sorely needed to restore balance, the glorification of the inconsistent teachings by eminent scholars makes the Hindu vain and conceited. "Forms of worship do not matter", says C. Rajagopalachari, "they may vary, but are really one. This is the great, all-important and unique attitude of Hinduism towards the so-called religious differences...When we consider how long ago this truth (Gita Doctrine of all paths leading to the same God) was seen and laid down for men's guidance in such emphatic terms, we are in a position to appreciate and admire the spiritual greatness of the fathers of Hinduism."[29] At another place Rajagopalachari boasts : "Whatever courage, heroism, self-sacrifice or greatness is to be found in our history or seen in the lives of our people has sprung from Vedanta which is in our blood and tradition."[30]

In the eleventh century, Alberuni, known as one of the finest intellects of the time, who spent ten years in India, wrote in his book *Tahqiq-i-Hind* that the Hindus "are in a state of confusion, devoid of any logical order, and in the last instance always mixed up with silly notions of the crowd." He summed up his views by remarking that the Hindus are haughty, foolishly vain, self-contained and stolid and that they believe "there is no country like theirs, no nation like theirs, no kings like theirs." Commenting on this, Jawaharlal Nehru confessed with dismay in 1945 that this is "probably a correct enough description of the people."[31]

The Karma theory which has sunk deep in Hindu mind breads indifference to the present. Millions live in India who have given up living while they are still alive. There is no

degradation like becoming indifferent to one's own condition. Such an indifference is denial of one's own humanity.

This then is the Hindu ethos which has gradually developed after the acceptance of the Gita philosophy as the highest doctrine. We shall now see how the philosophy dominated Indian mind for fifteen centuries to the ruin of the country and its people, until the process was temporarily checked by impact of Western culture in the beginning of the nineteenth century.

24

A False Prosperity

THE divine but confused message of the *Gita* proved dazzling to Hindu intellectuals of all schools of thought. Even the rationalists, misguided by its deceptive slogans, believed that the holy poem supported the Samkhya doctrine and would prevent the forces of Brahmin reaction from getting the upper-hand. So a new spirit of unity and yearning for social reconstruction was generated in the country which helped to restore a seeming atmosphere of peace, tranquillity and order.

Taking advantage of the changed mood of the people, a local chief, Chandragupta, acquired sufficient strength at Pataliputra (modern Patna) in 319 A.C. and laid the foundations of an empire. He took the proud title of *Maharajadhiraj* (King of kings). During his rule of sixteen years he consolidated the dynasty's hold over Koshala and Magadha. His son and successor, Samudragupta, who ruled from 335-375 A.C. subdued all neighbouring chiefs besides conquering the Punjab and Rajputana. Proceeding on a military expedition, he defeated all rulers on the eastern coast of India and pushed further carrying his victorious arms as far south as Krishna river. Excepting for the extreme south and parts in the west, Samudragupta brought most of India under his domination. It is remarkable that though he boasts of having subjugated the whole land he failed to erect a pillar of his own to make a proclamation and an Ashokan pillar was misued for the

purpose. "His (posthumous) panegyric", says Kosambi, "carved on an Ashokan pillar shfited from Kosmabi to Allahabad fort makes a powerful contrast in language, style and content with adjacent simple words of the great Mauryan. The *prashasti* in high Sanskrit with ornate long compounds is purely an announcement of triumphs. King after king is named as exterminated, vanquished in battle or pining for friendship."[1]

Samudragupta was succeeded on the throne by his son, Chandragupta II, in 375 A.C., who like his father, was adventurous, ambitious and bold. He annexed unconquered regions of western India and extended the empire to the Arabian sea. He assumed the title of *Vikramaditya* (Sun of Valour) by which he is commonly known. After his death in 414 A.C. other Gupta monarchs of lesser importance followed and the empire lasted till 530 A.C.

Under the powerful Guptas, peace in the country was integrated with an intellectual and cultural efflorescence. There was extraordinary development of art and literature. Trade was in a flourishing condition as is shown by the numerous coins of the time. The Chinese pilgrim, Fa-hien, who travelled over India for more than ten years (C. 400-411) during the reign of Vikramaditya, observes : "The people are numerous and happy ; they have not to register their households, or attend to any magistrates and their rules; only those who cultivate the royal land have to pay (a portion of) the grain from it. If they want to go, they go ; if they want to stay on, they stay. The king governs without decapitation or other corporal punishments."[2] The Chinese pilgrim does not refer to any disorder or lawlessness in the land nor to any hardships suffered by the people. His brief account gives on the whole the impression that security and contentment prevailed in the empire under Chandragupta Vikramaditya.

Relying on such reports, the Indian nationalist writers have justified the recrudescence of Brahminism and called the Gupta period as the golden age of Indian history. K. M. Munshi lays the blame for India's disintegration in the early centuries of Christian era at the door of the protestants. Buddhism which in his opinion "was not organically rooted in race memory and race tradition, and stood, in many respects, in antagonism to

them". Gloating over the defeat of Buddhist Revolution Munshi observes : "Chandragupta was succeeded by his son, Kumaragupta (A.C. 415 to 455) who inflicted a defeat on the invading Huns. Both of them stabilized what their predecessors had acquired and consolidated. These one hundred and fifty years of Gupta rule can rightly be called the Golden Prime of India."[3] He goes on to say : "The Gupta emperors became the symbols of a tremendous national upsurge. Life was never happier, our culture never more creative than during the Golden Prime of India."[4] Other nationalist historians are equally eulogistic in their praise of the Gupta rule.

No doubt the teachings of the Gita had performed a miracle. The poem has played an important role in temporarily rejuvenating Indian society, in making the path smooth for the Gupta monarchs to unify many parts of the Indian subcontinent and in improving the economic and social conditions of the people. But it is also true that this progress was primarily achieved not so much due to merit, efficiency or competence of Gupta rule as because the norms laid down by the Buddhist Revolution were still applicable in the governance of the country. It was not the rising neo-Brahminism which made the Guptas successful, but the glow of the vanishing system, the momentum of past centuries which had not yet come to a stop. It was the last flicker of the lamp of revolution which, under the deceptive liberalism of the Gita, afforded the chance to Samudragupta and Chandragupta to fulfil their ambition of achieving greatness. The Gupta period is not to be judged by the prosperity enjoyed by the upper classes but by the deteriorating social and economic condition of the masses, by the new laws enforced and the policies pursued by the rulers which ultimately pushed India into abysmal darkness for a long age.

Jawaharlal Nehru who yields to none in his admiration of the Guptas and joins the chorus of calling their rule as golden age, says : "Thus began the age of the imperial Guptas in 320 A.C. which produced a remarkable succession of great rulers, successful in war and in the arts of peace . . . . But the old self-assurance was going and these ideals began to develop a rigidity which was foreign to their nature. India seemed to draw into her shell, both physically and mentally."[5]

Like the Mauryas six hundred years before them, the Guptas built a vast empire but the objectives of the two were entirely different. Ashoka was solely interested in raising the moral standard of the people through inculcation of the spirit of *Dhamma* with the object of making them happy. He refused to believe that a king's prowess depended on his armed might; he hated war. But the Guptas glorified war and revelled in subjugating kings and their people by military conquests. Romila Thaper has brought out this distinction by saying that while Ashoka stopped at Mysore and did not wish to conquer South India or Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) which he could have easily done, Samudragupta in his place would have marched right down to Kanya Kumari and perhaps even attacked Ceylon to bring it under his rule if he could.[6] "The difference between Ashoka and Samudragupta of the Gupta dynasty in this matter is that Ashoka glories in the *dhamma vijaya* (victory of morality) and the latter glories in *yuddha vijaya* (victory in war)."[7] As already noted Samudragupta's panegyric inscribed on an Ashokan pillar mentions nothing except his conquests and exploits.

Neither the Guptas nor their Brahmin councillors were able to understand, just as the contemporary nationalist historians are not, that the success of the rulers lay in the renewed impetus which the revolutionary spirit had received by the false hope raised by the Gita. The Gupta potentates believed that neo-Brahminism had perfomred the miracle and, therefore, the entire State power was utilized on the one side to eradicate last vestiges of the Buddhist Revolution, liberal thought and democratic institutions and on the other for revival of Brahminical tenets, dogmas and traditions. "There can be hardly any doubt," affirms R. C. Majumdar, "that his (Samudragupta's) reign marked a distinct revival of the old glory and influence of the Brahminical religion which had suffered decline since Ashoka made Buddhism the dominant religion of India. The neo-Brahminical doctrine that 'the king is a great deity in human form' is reflected in the Allahabad record which describes Samudragupta as a god-dwelling on earth being a mortal only in celebrating the rites and the observances of mankind."[8]

The Guptas discouraged and even banned practices introduced during the period of the Revolution and took the country back to the days of sacerdotal supremacy. Whatever militated against the Brahminical cult was vigorously put down and banned. The caste system gained a new respectability; the rituals and the ceremonies which had fallen in disuse or forgotten by the people got a new lease of life. The Gupta kings gave vast lands as fiefs, huge sums as *dakshina* and hundreds of thousands of cows as gifts to the Brahmins. They replaced Prakrit, the common language of the people, by Sanskrit as the court language and national medium of intercourse.

That obscurantism had begun to overshadow the spirit of scientific investigation in the heyday of the Gupta Empire is evident from the different fates of Aryabhatta and Varahamihira.

Founder of Algebra and Astronomy, Aryabhatta (b 476 A.C.) was a renowned mathematician. He had no faith in astrology and horoscopy both of which he frequently derided as product of guesswork and thoroughly unreliable. He is believed to have deeply studied Greek, Alexandrian and Babylonian literature on astronomy and mathematics, drawn several theories from it and made his own contribution to the science. Long before Nicolaus Copernicus (1472-1543) discovered the heliocentric theory of the universe, Aryabhatta declared in 499 A.C. that the earth was a sphere and rotated on its axis and that it was the shadows of the earth and the moon which caused eclipses. By his own method of calculation he had estimated the year to have 365.3586805 days which is amazingly close to what modern astronomers hold. He is entitled to be called an astronomer with the scientific bent of mind to pose the fundamental problems of the science of heavenly bodies. He wrote books on mathematics and astronomy of which *Aryabhatteeya* is extant. His revolutionary theories were, however, opposed and devalued by the Brahmins and ruling class. Aryabhatta's contemporary, Varahamihira, divided astronomy into three branches—mathematics, horoscopy and astrology—laying emphasis on the last as the most important. Aryabhatta rejected the classification as well as importance of astrology. But Varahmihira, significantly, earned sacerdotal support and caused destruction of the urge for scientific study of astronomy in India.

Under the Guptas there was a spurt in the production of religious literature ; many *puranas* were composed in this period. A number of law-codes were produced, the best known among them being those of Katyayana, Narda, Yajnavalkya and Brihaspati. In the domain of arts, in painting, sculpture and architecture there was magnificent achievement. Some of the sciences as grammar, mathematics and astronomy also registered much progress. Dramatists and poets like Kalidas, Bhavabhuti, Bharvi and Magha, prose writers like Dandin, Subandhu and Bana, rhetoricians like Bhamaha, grammarians like Chandra, Vamana, and Bhartrihari, lexicographers like Amara, philosophers like Kumarila and Prabhakara and astronomers like Aryabhatta, Varahmihira and Brahmagupta all flourished during the Gupta period or a little later.[9]

All the same, whether in literature, science or the arts the Hindu production is inferior and certainly imitative and unoriginal. "It must be noted that toward its close artificiality was slowly but steadily creeping into the domain of literature and was destined to eclipse and stifle all real art". The best pieces such as the frescoes of Ajanta and statues of Buddha and Bodhisattvas are all the production of those who still cherished faith in the ideals of the Great Revolution.

The Revolution had popularized a democratic spirit in all parts of India, and even after the decline of the Buddhist faith the people preferred rule by consent to the autocracy which Braminism fostered. The Guptas suppressed democratic tendencies and crushed the spirit of freedom. "We cannot clearly trace the last stage in the dissolution of the republican system after more than a thousand years of recorded activity in Indian politics", observes R. C. Majumdar. "But it is certain that Gupta Imperialism was the main cause of its extinction."[10]

Profiting by the experience that they had gained during the days of the Revolution, the Brahmins besides producing fresh exegetic literature like the puranas and the tantras to suit the changed times, also revised the old religious texts or made additions to them wherever possible in order to render them acceptable to the intellectuals and others who had been infected by the heretical doctrines of rationalists and materialists. Astutely the arch rebel, Gautama the Buddha, was recognised

as the ninth incarnation of the highest Hindu god, Vishnu. In this way did the Brahmins stage a triumphant come-back in the social life of the Indian people.

"The victory was won (by the Brahmins) writes Rhys Davids, "but how far was it a victory ? The Brahmins had become the sole arbiters in law and social institutions. Their theory of castes had been admitted ; and to their own caste was accorded an unquestioned supremacy. Their claims to the exclusive right to teach was practically acknowledged. Of the Rajputs who had disputed their authority, the Buddhists and Jains, were both reduced to feeble minorities and the rest had become mostly subservient. All philosophy except their own pantheistic theosophy had been driven out of the field. But Vedic rites and Vedic divinities and Vedic language and Vedic theology, had also gone under in the struggle. The gods of the people received now the homage of the people. Their (Brahmin's) literature had to be recast to suit the new worship, to gain the favour and support of those who did not revere and worship the Vedic gods. And all sense of history had been lost in the necessity of garbling the story of the past so as to make it tally with their own pretensions."[11]

There was hectic activity in the circles of Brahmin literatures, Brahminism which had already undergone many changes in the pre-Gita era witnessed some more adaptations and amendments in the post-Gita period under the Guptas. Caste system was made rigid to the extent of introducing what is now known in political parlance as apartheid. In his *Brihat-Samhita* the astronomer, Varahamihira, assigns different quarters of the city to Brahmins, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras. "The distinction is carried by him to number of dwellings, as well as classes of chowries and umbrellas allowable to the four *varnas* respectively."[12] The Vedic rituals, ceremonies and observances were reintroduced in one form or another. The charms and amulets which had gone out of fashion during the revolutionary period were made popular again. The books of the period contain copious and repeated references to the belief in omens, incantations and portents prevalent among people in all walks of life. Numerous instances are found to show that kings and princes, besides the Brahmins, unscrupu-

lously exploited the superstitions of ignorant people to gain their ends. "It is thus obvious", says R. C. Majumdar, "that the foundations of that phase of Brahminical religion, which we call today Hinduism, were laid during the period under review (Gupta Rule)."[13]

The people in South India had never accepted the Vedic religion before the Christian era. They were either Buddhists or Jains before they were Hindus in faith. It was only after the rise of neo-Brahminism in Northern India and after it became well established under the Guptas, that Hinduism spread in the South. "But when once it reached that stage, it developed so strongly as to react with great results on the north, where the final victory was actually won during the period from Kumarila to Shankara (700-830 A.D.), both of them born in the south, and one of them, apparently of half Dravidian blood.[14]

Although it was Adi Shankaracharya who dealt the final blow to the revolutionary ideology through his exposition of Vedanta and Mayavad, the ground for its extinction had been prepared two centuries earlier by the social, political and economic changes effected by the Gupta emperors with the advice of their Brahmin councillors. Days had now passed when the Brahmins were looked down upon as enemies of progress and peddlers of sacerdotalism feathering their own nests. They regained the lost position in the early centuries of Christian era. Adducing evidence of the old inscriptions, the distinguished research scholar, Dr. Bhandarkar, says that "for four centuries (from 300 B.C. to 100 A.D.) no Brahmin, no Brahmin temple, no sacrifice, no ritualistic act of any kind is ever, even once, referred to. There is a very large number of gifts recorded as given by kings, princes and chiefs, by merchants, goldsmiths, artisans and ordinary householders ; but not one of them is given in support of anything, of any opinion or divinity or practice with which the Brahmins had anything to do". Bhandarkar adds : "In the second century after Christ they (the inscriptions) begin to record grants of land to Brahmins. In the third there are also a few instances. From the fourth century onwards there are quite numerous inscriptions showing a marked rise in Brahmin influence. The

kings are stated to have carried out the most complicated and expensive sacrifices, such as the Horse-Sacrifice...There are grants of villages for the performance of sacrificial rites and numerous grants of land to Brahmins and the temples in their charge."[15]

This view is corroborated by that ardent admirer of Indo-Aryan culture, E. B. Havell, by saying that "until the second or third century A.D. practically all royal or private benevolences were bestowed upon Jaina and Buddhist institutions and that patronage of Brahmins as such and Brahminical deities did not begin until after that time. It might therefore be assumed that the effect of Ashoka's propaganda was to reduce Brahmin influence to a very low ebb for many centuries, and that it was not until the beginning of the Gupta era that the Brahmins regained the position they had held as exponents of Indo-Aryan culture."[16]

Thus under the Guptas revolutionaries were on the run and the Brahmins were again in possession of the field. With the rulers to back them the priests were feared and allowed to manage social and religious life as they liked. "The leading role as a highly trained and purposive agency in integration was played by Brahmins", boasts C. M. Munshi, the most vehement supporter of Hindu reaction in contemporary India ; "men of learning and teachers ; literary men and religious preceptors ; "swamins" who specialised in the sacrificial lore ; the *pashupata-charyas*, feared and respected by the people, wielded vast influence over kings and founded temples and monasteries, all of which became the centres of the new socio-religious movement of power."[17]

The main income of the State was derived from land revenue. The large majority of the people were wage-earners working on the land whose wretched condition may be inferred from the many reference to them in the *Smritis* (law-codes) promulgated during the period. The lawgiver, Narada, allowed only one-tenth of the grain produced as wages for his toil to the agricultural labourer. Only in the case of Buddhist monastic lands as much as five-sixth of the produce was paid to the labourers.[18]

This then was the real shape of the Indian society under the Guptas which has been called as the Golden Age of India by the apologists of Brahmin reaction. While the Guptas on the one hand restored semblance of stablilty and security to the country, on the other, they cut at the roots of social and intellectual progress by reviving the dead order with its rigid caste distinctions and life of superstitious beliefs and total dependence on priests and gods. The spirit of humanism, of self-reliance and fellow-feeling which had been fostered by the Buddhist Revolution was shattered, making the people prone to fatalism. Their inborn force of resistence to evil and injustice having been dissipated the Indians were reduced to a position where they were hardly able to defend their national independence.

Though some small classes of the people were no doubt happy and prosperous in different spheres of life the masses were groaning and passing through dire poverty and wretchedness. The country was in fact marching ahead to the great fall which came about soon after the disintegration of the Gupta Empire.

"Uncritical historians". wrote M. N. Roy, "particularly those with nationalist predilections confound the greatness with the happiness of a nation. The greatness of a nation in the past is erroneously measured by the magnificence of the royal court and the opulence of the ruling aristocracy. It is conveniently overlooked who paid for that greatness and splendour, and what was the condition of the multitude who filled and toiled so that the rulers could put on the flattering grab of greatness, magnificence, and renown. Invariably, the life of the multitude was devoted, not voluntarily but under duress, to produce the material that went into the making of that glorious garb of equivocal greatness. In the early and mediaeval ages, the productivity of labour was necessarily much lower than at present. Consequently, conceptional grandeur of royal cities, imposing magnificience of courts, flaunting extravagance of the nobility, vain stateliness of public and private architecture and the wasteful richness of temples and mausoleums, were not possible unless national income was very disproportionately distributed. As a matter of fact, those very

monuments of national greatness testify to the endless oppression and grinding poverty of the masses. They represented a futile effort to conceal the decay of the established social order and the consequent destitution and degradation of the people."[19]

Had it not been a false prosperity and if the shinning picture of its all-round progress drawn by the nationalist historians had been truthful, India should have been able to rise from height to height. But we shall show that after the Guptas had used and exhausted the little surviving revolutionary fervour of the people and fully restored the inequitious system of Brahminism, the Indian society plunged headlong into a state of darkness and savagery from which it has not fully emerged to this day.

Crudely emulating Ashoka, the Hindu monarchs launched on a campaign of foreign conquests, not with the aim of conveying any message of moral excellence, nobility of character and social justice but to thrust the evils of Brahminism on the people of other lands. Medatithi, a great commentator on Manu, said : "A king of meritorious conduct could conquer even the land of *malechhas* (non-Hindus) establish chaturvarnya (caste system) there, assign to the malechhas a position occupied by the *chandalas* (outcastes) in Aryavarta and render that land fit for sacrifice as Aryavarta itself."[20] A number of Hindu princes supported by fanatic Brahmin missionaries were successful in the adventure of exporting the counter-revolutionary culture to the backward countries of South-East Asia. "The (neo-Brahmin) culture having come to dominate India", writes K. M. Munshi "was on a march to wider expansion. Indians crossed the frontiers and established kingdoms, carrying religious, literary and cultural traditions with them to far-off lands. In this way came into existence the Sailendra Empire in Java, Sumatra and Malay Peninsula (C.A.D. 778-13th century); dynasty of Panduranga (C.A.D. 757-860) and the Bhrigu dynasty (C.A.D. 860 985) in Champa, the dynasties of Jaya-Varman II (A.D. 802-877) and Indra-Varman (C.A.D. 877-1001) in Kambuja, the dynasty of Sanjaya (A.D. 732-928) in Central Java and the dynasty of Sindok (C.A.D. 929-1007) in Eastern Java."[21] But chaturvarnya culture could not have any fascination for common

people with inner urge for spiritual freedom and social justice. Therefore when the liberating message of the Prophet of Arabia reached these countries, the Hindu empires fell like nine pins and Hinduism was overthrown to be replaced by Islam. Only Buddhism could hold its own in some of these regions and survive to this day.

25

Plunge into Darkness

WHILE wavering intellectuals, duped by the deceptive slogans of the Gita, accepted, along with countless common people, the supremacy of the Brahmins, the genuine rationalists remained steadfast in their views and opposed the doctrines of the Hindu religion. The revivalists policy of the Guptas must have hardened the still surviving progressive elments in pursuing their objective of spreading liberal thoughts, heretic views and the anti-God message. Fa-hein who travelled extensively (400 to 411 A.C.) all over the country during Vikramaditya's rule has recorded an interesting account of various aspects of Indian life. Paying tributes to the administrative efficiency of the Gupta monarch, he reports that "in mid-India alone he found no less than ninety-six heretical sects, all of whom admitted the reality of worldly phenomenon."[1] But the progressive revolutionaries had played their innings and were on the way out.

After the disintegration of the Gupta empire and with the restoration of Brahmin supremacy the social fabric had been enfeebled and another chance of uniting India under Hindu rule did not occur till the twentieth century.

After the Buddhist Revolution was given a quietus and the caste system firmly re-established, the Gita teachings began to produce their natural consequences. All illusions about its progressive role disappeared. Brahmins of course ruled the

roost. But non-Brahmins particularly the teeming, toiling millions of the lower castes, the women and the non-conformists were subjected to many disabilities and hardships.

The code of Manu, (*Manu Smriti*) the universally recognized law book of the Hindu society, was probably drawn up in earlier centuries, but is taken to represent the sociology and polity obtaining under the Guptas. In it caste distinctions are strictly defined and the supremacy of the Brahmins is regarded as incontestable.

The most famous of the commentators on Manu is Medatithi who lived in 825-900 A.C. He exalted the position of the Brahmins. While the *Matsya Purana* composed during the Gupta period prescribed for a Brahmin guilty of a serious offence banishment or branding with distinctive signs where ordinarily death penalty would be called for, Medatithi forbade corporal punishment or even a money-fine to be inflicted upon a guilty Brahmin : a Brahmin if *atatayi* (desperado who was ordered to be killed at sight), says Medatithi, should not be slain.[2]

Manu ordained that the Brahmins were to be honoured as such by other classes even though they descended to mean occupation and whether they were learned or illiterate. As against this, the highest duty of a shudra, says Manu, is the service of Brahmins with the expectation that if faithfully performed it might win for him Brahminahood in the next birth. The shudras were not permitted to read scriptures in this life.

When the triumph of neo-Brahminism was complete and the Buddhist Revolution vanquished, commentaries on *Manu Smriti* appeared or new codes were promulgated which came down with a heavier hand upon the lower castes. "It is impossible to ignore the studied degradation", observes U.N. Ghoshal, a Hindu nationalist historian, "to which important sections of the population (the so-called aniyajatis and even in extreme cases the shudras) were condemned by them (the Brahmins) after the older authorities."[3]

The *smritis* produced during the period under discussion surpass the earlier codes of Hindu society in inflicting social and religious disabilities on the working classes. One of the

eminent lawgivers of the time, Parashara, laid down that "eating a shudra's food, association with a shudra, sitting on the same seat with a shudra and taking lessons from a shudra are acts dragging down even a 'blazing' person."[4]

Describing the extremely degraded condition to which the lower caste people had been reduced, Ghoshal writes : "A new departure is marked by a few texts which go to the length of declaring the touch or even sight of a shudra to be an act of pollution. Thus according to an unnamed *smriti* (code) a twice-born man (a member of upper three castes) on seeing a shudra, must take a bath."[5] *Palakapya Samhita* forbids teaching even a virtuous shudra.

The condition of chandalas (outcastes) was the worst of all. The Hindu lawgivers allotted to them meanest work. They were forbidden to walk on public streets during night in villages and towns and in day-time they were to move about with marks distinguishing them from others so that they did not pollute the members of higher castes by touch. The Chinese travellers report that such practices had been started in the Gupta age. Thus came into existence the untouchables, unseeables, and unapproachables among the working classes whose number gradually swelled to millions in later centuries.

Manu held women in low estimation. "A woman is never fit for independence," he declares. Her father must protect her in childhood, her husband in her youth and her sons in her old age. It was taken for granted that a woman had no business with the sacred texts of the scriptures.[6] As the embers of the dying revolutionary fire were still smouldering in the lifetime of the Manu he made some provision to mitigate harshness in treatment of the lower castes and women. He said, for instance, that wisdom might be learnt even from a shudra, just as gold might be extracted from impure substances or nectar from poison. Similarly, in case of women he remarked that "they must be honoured by their husbands and male relations" and "a good and virtuous wife must never be disgraced."[7] But annotating the Code of Manu Medatithi ordained that girls should be given away in marriage when they are eight or nine years in age and called *nangnika* (a girl too young to have any sense of shame in the presence of males)

and that a man should marry a girl very much younger than himself, such being the practice of cultured men.[8] Other *smritis* enjoined upon guardians of girls under severe moral and spiritual sanctions to give them away in marriage before puberty, in any case before the age of twelve years. *Madanparijata* ordains bestowal of nangnika even upon a worthless husband, when a worthy one is not available, rather than keeping the girl unmarried.

The various authorities of Hindu laws of this period extensively quote the doctrines in support of perpetual subjection of women as well as of their lifelong tutelage under their male relations at successive stages of their lives. A woman was now strictly forbidden to marry after the death of her husband, and even to burn herself with the husband's dead body. Parashara Madhva, one of the authorities on Hindu jurisprudence, holds that while great bliss attends the widow adopting a vow of chastity instead of contracting a second marriage, she earns still greater merit by following her husband to the funeral pyre.[9] The *smritis* from the time of Brihaspati onwards", writes Ghoshal, "inculcate upon the widow, the obligation of self-immolation on the funeral pyre of her husband *sahamarana anumarna* or *anugamana*, (commonly known as *sati*) as her alternative or else as her exclusive duty. The former view is repeated in the *Madanaparijata* (196-203). The author, it is true, explains that the injunction (after Harita) to perform *sahamarana*, is the general duty of all chaste wives other than those who are pregnant or have infant children, down to the Chandalas. Where the husband has died abroad, it is further explained, the Brahmana widow may certainly burn herself along with his bones, while a widow of another caste, failing to procure the bones, may burn herself with or even without any of his symbols."[10]

There is historical evidence to show that the practice of becoming sati was enforced after the law was promulgated in the *smritis* and other scriptures. In the *Rajatarangini* Kalhana has narrated scores of cases of Hindu women who were burnt along with the dead bodies of their husbands. Friar Odoric (c A.C. 1321-22) noticed the practice in Quilon on the Malabar coast ; Friar Jordanus (A.C. 1323-30) records its occurrence

in Sind. Ibn Batuta (A.C. 1333-1346) was an eye-witness of it in Dhar in Malwa.[11] Thereafter the evil practice spread and in the words of Romila Thapar "the becoming of sati whether voluntary or forced became fashionable."[12] An increasing number of women were callously burnt year after year throughout the medieval age though some Muslim kings made unsuccessful attempts to stop the cruel practice. Nicolo Conti, an Italian who visited Vijayanagar in 1420 A.C. during the reign of Devaraya II believed that at least 2000 out of the 12,000 wives of the king would be required to burn themselves on the funeral pyre after his death.[13] To escape the savagery of the Hindu society, women had either to become Buddhist nuns, join the theatrical profession or become Courtesan and prostitutes.

The time had arrived to make the rationalist and other heretics share humiliation. Says Ghoshal: "In the *smritis* of this period we also catch reflections of the Brahminical view relating to social intercourse with various heterodox sects. It appears that not only the touch but even the sight of these sects was regarded by some authorities as involving pollution. Thus *Barahmanda Purada* enjoins that one should bathe with his clothes on after touching Shaivas, Pashupatas, Lokayatikas, and others. According to a similar text in *Shattrin Sanmata,* one should do the same if one touches Bauddhas (Buddhists) and others."[14] While dealing with the antipollution obsession of the Brahmins, Ghoshal has made out a list of untouchables in the orthodox eyes. It consists of "Buddhists, Jains, materialists (lokayatikas), atheists (*nastikas*), followers of Kapila, Shaivas and Shaktas outside the Vedic pale (according to Apararka)."[15] The entry of Hindus into Buddhist or Jain temples was also forbidden by the authors of the Brahminical texts, lest they are polluted by so doing.

In ancient times, as stated earlier, adventurous Indians were fond of going abroad for commerce and trade which afforded them the opportunity of coming into contact with foreigners and imbibing new ideas and learning new techniques. The missionary work of Ashoka and other Buddhist rulers had promoted the habit of travelling overseas. The Brahmins disliked it because they feard that foreign travel widened

vision and heretical ideas were born of contact with people of other nations. Ritual purity was becoming an obsession with the upper castes. Manu prohibited sea voyage. Commentators on his Code declared that going abroad caused impurity and loss of caste, dharma. To the detriment of intellectual advancement this canon was upheld more rigorously in subsequent centuries when Brahminism acquired full sway over the land. The ban had also an added advantage to the Brahmins because it curbed the economic power of the merchants and the trading community, suspected for their progressive and revolutionary views. "So long as India kept her mind open", wrote Jawaharlal Nehru, "and gave of her riches to others, and received from others what she lacked, she remained fresh and strong and vital. But the more she withdrew into her shell, intent on preserving herself, uncontaminated by external influences, the more she lost that inspiration and her life became increasingly a dull round of meaningless activities all centred in the dead past. Losing the art of creating beauty, her children lost even the capacity to recognize it."[18]

The inequitable, unjust and inhuman social order became a fertile ground for growth of irrational beliefs. The faith in magic, sorcery, incantations, charms and amulets fostered a thousand years ago by the *Atharva Veda* and the *Brahmanas* but shattered by the Buddhist Revolution was reviewed and reinforced with new writings of the Hindu preceptors. The *Matsya Purana* exhaustively deals with them and denotes their effective use by Brahmins to ward off misfortune and disease. The same purana devotes a whole chapter to the methods of propitiating trees which are said to exert tremendous influence on the destiny of mankind. Medatithi describes malevolent rites (*abhichara*) which cause sudden death by incantations, the magic spells which are meant to bring others under control and sorcery (*kritya*) which produces conditions of insanity and distrust against friends and relations.[19] "Repeatedly in the literature of this period", says Ghoshal, "we have concrete instances of such superstitions holding (even) high-ups in their grip. In Upamitibhava Prapanchkatha we are reminded of the steps taken by ministers to avert an evil eye (durjana chakshu-dosha) from affecting the king and the queen...In Karrpuraman-

jari we read how the soothsayers prophesied that the heroine's husband would be an emperor and the queen herself accordingly arranged her marriage with the king... The Arab writer Abu Zaid also refers to 'the most astonishing feats' of the diviners and those who drew omens from the flight of crows in India.[19]

The stories in *Kathasaritsagara,* a well known literary production of the period, show how widespread was the popular belief in omens and portents, in auspicious and inauspicious times as well as in charms and spells of witchcraft. The references in *Manasollasa* to such beliefs indicate that they were held even in aristocratic and royal circles. The famous traveller, Marco Polo says that the people recorded the date and hour of a child's birth immediately after the event to learn its future, and the Indian acted by reference to astrology and with the advice of diviners skilled in sorcery and magic.

It was under the Guptas that the Hindus started the worship of the cow and became too blind about their veneration for this particular animal that for committing sins of "impurity" like taking food and drink from the hands of a shudra, they were ordained to purify themselves by eating cowdung or drinking bovine urine with mantras chanted by a Brahmin. The disgusting practice has come down to our own days.

With toiling millions and entire womanhood reduced to subhuman level, rationalists and progressives held in disgrace and soul-killing superstitions sedulously spread by the Brahmins India fell prostrate. The fourfold caste system recognized by the Gita gave birth to countless sub-castes which refused to have intimate social relations with each other. The division and sub-division led to perpetual animosity and enmity, bitterness and acrimony. Every sub-caste looked upon every other sub-caste as its foe intent upon harming it. The fissiparous tendencies were reflected in social life in general and politics in particular. Never again after the banishment of Buddhism was the Indian subcontinent united under the Hindus on the scale and to the extent as had been done under the Maurayas and the Guptas. The few empires which rose and fell were of little consequence. The country was partitioned into big or small kingdoms which were constantly at war against each

other. The reason for such a state of affairs is not far to seek. By the very nature of its philosophy, Hinduism was unable to generate forces of cohesion and unity. In a society where the overwhelming majority of its members—workers and women in particular—were condemned to a life of servitude and misery while a small percentage of men belonging to the upper castes had full liberty to mercilessly exploit the rest, what incentive was there to forge unity on a national scale ?

A little later we shall discuss in detail the many pernicious evils which were born of the divisive social system and how these were glorified for over a thousand years by the leaders of Brahminism and followers of Gita-doctrines. Here we shall look into the economic and political consequences of the irrational notions which were popularized by the holy scriptures.

The condition of the lower castes and toilers in general, none-too-rosy in the Gupta Period, continued to deteriorate in later centuries. Under the feudal system with an increase in the number of intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled, the peasant was forced to pay extra taxes in addition to the basic land tax. Separate taxes, distinct from the land tax, were levied by the feudal lords to maintain public works such as roads, irrigation canals, etc., though earlier the expenditure on these was met from land tax. The temple authorities levied their dues separately. *Agraharas* (land grants) given to the Brahmins were tax free, so the loss in revenue from these lands had to be made good from the peasants in one way or another. The tenant farmers paid one half to three-quarters of the crops to the land-owner. The natural result of these measures was that producers of national wealth were reduced to utter penury and wretchedness.

The wealth thus appropriated was not spent on any social welfare schemes or even expansion of commerce or trade but on lavish consumption. The feudatories built palatial homes richly ornamented or magnificent temples for the glory of the gods and the pleasure of the priests. While poverty was abounding all over the country, the temples became treasure-houses containing immense wealth. "The Temple at Tanjore", says R.Thapar, "possibly the richest during this period, had an

income of 500 lb. troy of gold, 250 lb. troy of precious stones and 600 lb. troy of silver, which was acquired through donations and contributions and in addition to the revenue from hundreds of villages. As temple staff, it maintained in considerable comfort 400 women associated with entertainment (the *devadasis*), 21 attendants, 57 musicians and readers of the texts, quite apart of course from the many hundreds of priests who also lived off the temple."[20] No wonder the Hindu temples attracted the attention of the *malechha* (foreign) invaders who besides satisfying their greed by plunder achieved religious merit by destroying the idols of the infidels.

It is remarkable that technical professions requiring surgical, medical, engineering or mathematical knowledge developed during the days of Great Revolution were not only discouraged but also denounced as sinful.

Medatithi regards handicrafts as low occupations. Mechanical work was to be looked down upon according to other commentators of Manu. Even such public utility works as building bridges and constructing embankments to control the flow of water came under this category.

From early times, beginning with the Aryans India had been invaded by foreign hordes, mostly from the North-West. Before the fall of Buddhism, Medians, Iranians, Greeks, Shakas or Scythians, Bactrians, Parthians, Kushans or the Yah Chih and Huns were the prominent races which swept over vast tracts in the north and the west of the country. Failing to oust them, the Indians of those days, impelled by humanistic outlook fostered by liberal ideas of heterodox schools, quietly assimilated them one after the other and made them part and parcel of the Indian society. "The overall impression left by the mass of literary and archaeological evidence seems clearly to suggest", observes Nihar ranjan Ray, "that xenophobia as a socio-psychological phenomenon was unknown to Indians, or otherwise countless number of Greeks and Romans, Shakas, Kushans, and Hunas and a number of other Central Asian nomads and pastorals including the pre-Islamic Turks, some of whom had wielded considerable political power and authority could not have been incorporated and integrated into the body social of the Indian population."[21] Today no descendant of

the foreign races (excepting Muslims whose case will be discussed presently) remember that originally they were not natives of India. They yield to none in their love of the country. All of us are Hindus or Indians and there is no racial or cultural distinction between the Dravidians and Aryans on one side and the descendants of these late arrivals on the other barring the differences occasioned by the Brahminical caste-system which, however, are common to all the people.

Foreign invasions did not cease after the fall of Buddhism but their consequences were different and disastrous. Disunited as never before, with large majority of people sullen and aggrieved and perpetual warfare going on among petty chiefs more interested in maintaining the Vedic rituals and building temples than in the welfare of the people, India became a hunting ground for ambitious adventurers from abroad. Wave after wave of invaders came, put thousands to the sword, looted the wealthy temples and shrines, occupied parts of the land and, with the bare support of a handful but loyal soldiers, despotically ruled for long periods. The Indians having under the revivalist dispensation lost zest for life and spirit of self-confidence, the country went to pieces and became vulnerable. With no expectation of justice from the indigenous social system the oppressed masses clung to the hope of receiving fair treatment at the hands of the invaders whose gospel promised freedom from slavery imposed by Hindu religious codes.

The first batch of invaders in the eighth century, when Hinduism had been consolidated, consisted of the followers of prophet Mohammed of Arabia. About 710 A.C. one of the armies of Khalifa Walid, under command of a young chieftain named Mohammed Ibn Kasim, then only seventeen years old, invaded Sind and after defeating and killing the Brahmin king, Dahir, conquered the whole of Indus Valley. What causes led to the easy victory of the Muslim lad ? Let a nationalist Indian historian reply :

> "The foremost among these (causes) seems to be the inequitous system of caste and the absence of contact with the outside world. The first resulted in a fragmentation of Indian society into mutually exclusive classes, among whom the privileged minority preserved their

> vested interests by depriving the masses of many civil rights, specially of education and free intercourse and association on equal terms with their, fellow men, and further by imposing on them the most irritating disabilities on the one hand and tremendous weight of innumberable duties and obligations towards the privileged classes on the other."[22]

Islam was born in Arabia in the seventh century as a liberating and unifying force which brought light and freedom to millions of human beings socially enslaved in the Afro-Asian continents. Conceived initially to unify the scattered and warring Bedouin tribes of the Arabian peninsula, it achieved phenomenal success in converting peoples of different countries and diverse faiths from the banks of Sindhu to the shores of Atlantic ocean in a bare hundred years. This miracle of history took place primarily due to the revolutionary significance of Muhammad's teachings and the ability of Islam to bring out the masses from the hopeless situation created by the decay of the antique civilisations of Greece, Rome and Persia. Having accomplished the task of unifying the nomads of the desert into a nation, Muhammad armed the Arabs with a slogan of revolt against social injustice and tyranny in general. There was a ready response from the down-trodden, oppressed and destitute millions living in the neighbouring countries. The advance of the armies of a new revolutionary ideology could not be resisted and one country after another fell and embraced Islam.

"There were many contacts", laments Jawaharlal Nehru. "during this period and Arabs learnt much of Indian mathematics, astronomy and medicine. And yet, it would appear, that the initiative for all these contacts came chiefly from the Arabs and though the Arabs learned much from India, the Indians did not learn much from the Arabs. The Indians remained aloof, wrapped up in their own conceits, and keeping as far as possible within their own shells. This was unfortunate for the intellectual ferment of Baghdad and the Arab renaissance movement would have much shaken up the Indian mind just when it was losing much of its creative vigour. In that

spirit of intellectual inquiry the Indians of an older day would have found kinship in thought."[21]

The message of Islam, however, reached India not through the revolutionary Saracens in the eighth century but through Turkish conquerors in the twelfth century at a time when the new faith had shed much of its revolutionary character and it had been transformed into a weapon by degenerate leaders and military adventurers for plundering countries to acquire personal power and live in great luxury. Spread of the Quranic message was only secondary to the vulgar aims of the conquerors. Many a ruler proved to be fanatical and cruel towards the conquered Hindus. Pillage and plunder became a watchword : demolition of Hindu temples and destruction of sacred Hindu literature, architecture and sculpture engaged attention of the rulers ; social revolution and intellectual regeneration the crying needs of medieval India were given little importance under the rule of the Muslim monarchs. Therefore, while on the one hand the liberating essence of the Islamic philosophy remained concealed from the eyes of the Hindus, on the other, the savagery, vandalism and intolerance of the conquerors became synonymous with Islam. A hostility in the minds of the Hindus towards the religion of Prophet Muhammed and his followers was generated which has not only persisted but has grown in intensity through the centuries. Though most of the Indian Muslims are descendants of Hindu converts and belong to the same race, the two religious commuities have not been able to forget the past, reconcile themselves to the common fate and become one even in the twentieth century.

The more effectively the Brahmins were able to suppress rational thought and forces of progress in the country the heavier became the attacks of the adventurers professing Islam until ultimately, by the end of the twelfth century, Northern India was overrun and occupied by them. In the following century the greater part of the subcontinent came under their sway. True to the principles taught by the Gita that a Hindu should have unshakable and complete faith in *Ishavara* for his safety and protection, the Hindus, when attacked, behaved like brainless imbeciles. The recorded details of certain important

battles are evidence of the demoralization which had set in after Brahmin domination over the society.

One such event was the battle of Somnath in Gujarat. When Mahmud Gazni reached at the gate of the famous shrine in the middle of January 1025 A.C. he found there a strongly defended fortress on the seashore. "The Hindus who assembled on the rampart of the fort were passing their time in merry-making fondly believing that Somnatha had drawn the Muslims there only to annihilate them for the sins they had committed in demolishing idols elsewhere.[24]

The first day's attack made by the Muslim armies of Mahmud proved abortive. "Next day the Sultan renewed the operation with greater intensity, against which the brave resistance offered by the Hindus was of no avail... Bands of the Hindus in succession entered the temple to pray with all their hearts for victory and then coming out of it rushed against their enemies only to be killed. The Sultan made a triumphal entry into the temple, broke down the *Shiva-Linga* (idol of Shiva) into pieces and took possession of the vast wealth it contained, said to have been worth 20,000 *dirhams*. The temple was then razed to the ground. The fragments of the *Shiva Linga* were carried to Gazni, where they were made to serve as steps at the gate of the Jami Mosque—an act of profanity imitated by later Muslim rulers."[25]

The Indians could neither successfully stem the tide of foreign invasion nor assimilate the followers of the Arabian prophet in their social system as they had done in the case of the previous invaders in the Buddhist past. "The segregation of the Muslim community", says R.C. Majumdar, "was rendered necessary at least to a large extent, by the social rules and habits of the Hindus who regarded the Muslims as unclean and impure. The Hindus maintained no social intercourse with the other community by way of inter-dining and inter-marriage. They were uncompromising in this respect and regarded the touch of the Muslims or even a scent of their food, as pollution."[26] Ibn Batuta, a learned African Muslim, who travelled over India during Muhammad Tughluk's rule (1325-51) expressed indignation at the attitude of the Hindus, and bitterly complained that no Hindu would give a utensil to a Muslim

for drinking water ; "if a Muslim is fed out of their vessels, they either break the vessels or give them away to the Mussalmans."[27] The African traveller records that infidels (Buddhists) in Ceylon were unlike the infidels (Hindus) of India. He draws a refreshing contrast between the two non-Muslim communities.[28]

The Muslim conquest of India was the result of suppression of toiling masses, women folk and progressive forces as well as of the re-establishment of the divisive caste system and the acceptance of Shankara's Mayavad. If this world is unreal and full of miseries with little remedy to improve it, why should one care to defend the country from outside invasion ? If God propels man like a machine on potter's wheel. He knows best what to do ; for his protection and welfare ; what use trying to be up and doing. That was the philosophy guiding the dehumanised Indians. After having bowed to foreign conquerors, the Hindus endured slavery, barbarity, dishonour and desecration of holy shrines for over seven hundred years of the despotic Muslim rule.

Despotism in human society has no justification whatsoever in the eyes of those who believe that man is sovereign and the maker of his own destiny. But to others who believe that not a leaf moves in this world without the will of unseen and unknowable God as held by the Gita, social injustice and human miseries are things which have to be patiently borne. To safeguard their class interests the Brahmins had deliberately destroyed independent thought together with the forces of resistance and rebellion ; therefore no alternative was left for the Hindus but to perceive in the tyranny of the Muslim rulers on this earth a manifestation of the all-pervasive power of Ishvara as taught by Sri Krishna. Man could not do better to save himself than surrender without murmur. This explains why and how bhakti yoga of the Gita became the most popular cult during the centuries of Muslims rule.

As stated before Ramanujacharya was the first to extol the excellence of bhakti marga and he was followed by Madhva and Vallabha. There is nothing in the teachings of these masters to encourage rational thought, spirit or self-confidence or resistance to evil, they positively reject the sovereignty and

dignity of the individual. Complete dependence on God, trust in his doings and faith in his goodness and mercy are the keynote of their philosophies. God is all love ; he is generous and compassionate but he can also be terrible, cruel and destructive. His ways are inscrutable and man has no right to challenge Him ; he must submissively obey and wait for the day of deliverance. This was the spiritual reflection of the social and political conditions which obtained for six hundred years of Muslim rule in India. In simple terms it meant that if man cannot resist injustice and rise in rebellion against tyranny then he should believe it to be inevitable and providential and endure it in the hope that some day as a reward for meek submissiveness the rulers will become good and kind. Significantly, the firmer and more extensive became the Muslim rule, the bhakti cult, also known as Vaishnavism, gained wide acceptance and the crushed people found solace in it.

It is notable that while Hindu temples were being demolished by the hundred and the worshippers tortured and slain, the Blessed Lord failed to honour the pledge given in the Gita (IV-8) of appearing as an avatar for the protection of His religion and the oppressed people. Strange still, that no devotee of the Blessed Lord felt indignant at the betrayal. That many sensitive orthodox scholars felt oppressed and were driven to act desperately, there can be little doubt. The great Maratha saint Jnaneshvara, who committed suicide is an instance in point. Analysing the saint's desperation D.D. Kosambi, observes : "He embodied the inner contradictions which he discerned in contemporary society but failed to discover in the Gita. Therefore, he could launch no movement towards their solution. Though one adept in Yoga as a path towards physical immorality and mystical perfection there was nothing left for him except suicide. That the gods remained silent at the unexpected Muslim blow which devastated their many richly endowed temples and no incarnation of Krishna turned up to save the Yadava Kingdom, might have been another cause for despair."[29]

Among the best known apostles of the bhakti cult are Ramananda (1299-1411), Kabir (D. 1587), Nanak (1468-1538)

and the most famous of them all, Krishna Chaitanya. Chaitanya was born in Feburary 1486 in Nawadwip (West Bengal). Wrapped in mystic and emotional experience, he incessantly uttered the name of Krishna, laughed, wept, raved and frequently fell into trance. In gatherings of devotees like himself he recited emotional and devotional songs called kirtans, often consisting of mere name of God mostly Hari and Krishna. The chorus was accompanied by loud instrumental music which became a regular feature of the life of Vaishnavas. The devotees would dance for hours, weep, tremble and cry like mad men. Chaitanya travelled widely in south and west India for two years (1509-11) preaching the divine message of bhakti yoga. He lived in Vrindavan for a year. The last twelve years of his life were spent in continual frenzy called *divyonmada* (madness of divine love). He died in 1533 when already thousands had embraced his creed.

When the worldly life offers absolutely nothing but endless hardship, disease, squalor and poverty and there is also the depressing perspective of still deeper degradation, then sensitive people find hope and promise of eternal happiness in a mysterious life which was lived in medieval India by the Muslim sufis and Vaishnava saints and their innumerable followers. "India's propensity for transcendental pursuit", says Heinrich Zimmer, "and the misery of India's history are, most certainly, intimately related to each other ; they must not be regarded separately. The ruthless philosophy of politics and the superhuman achievements in metaphysics represent the two sides of a single experience of life."[30]

26

A Pleasant Interlude

BY and large the Turkish Muslim conquerors of India acted against the revolutionary, liberal, accommodating spirit of Islam. As such, they proved to be fanatical and cruel towards the conquered. But for the barbarities and the un-Islamic behaviour of the Muslim monarchs who ruled for over six centuries, the entire Indian subcontinent might have embraced Islam as did may countries in the Middle East, North Africa and North-West India. Considering the chaotic social and political conditions at the time with the decline of antique Hindu civilisation and the defeat of Buddhist Revolution had produced in the country such a possibility could not be ruled out.

But the alien masters looked down upon the Hindus as unclean infidels and cowards deserving no sympathy and fit only for being suppressed and fleeced. Idolatrous practices, obsequious manners and debasing customs of the Hindus were detested by the believers in Quran. No doubt some of the individual rulers were kind and generous. "But on the whole", writes a liberal Hindu historian, "the frame work (of administration) remained in tact, for it was based on the fundamental principles of Islamic theocracy. It recognised only one faith, one people and one supreme authority, acting as the head of a religious trust.

The Hindus, being infidels or non-believers, could not claim the full rights of citizens. At the very best they could be treated as *zimmis*, an insulting title which connoted political inferiority and a low status of helplessness like a minor under a guardian". The historian continues: "The Islamic State regarded all non-Muslims as its enemies, to curb whose growth in power and number was conceived to be its main interest. The ideal preached even by high officials was to exterminate them totally, but in actual practice they seem to have followed an alternative laid down in the Quran which calls upon the Muslims to fight the unbelievers till they pay *jazia* with due humility. This was the tax which the Hindus had to pay for permission to live in their ancestral homes under a Muslim ruler."[1] When Ala-uddin Khilji asked his Kazi (Chief Justice) to explain the legal position of the Hindus in the State, he replied: "They are called *kharaj ghuzar* (payers of tribute), and when revenue officer demands silver from them, they should with all humility and respect, tender gold. If the officer throws dirt (or spits) into their mouths they must unreluctantly open their mouths wide to receive it. By doing so they show respect to the officer. The due submission of the non-Muslims (*zimmis*) is exhibited in this humble payment and by this throwing of dirt into their mouths. The glorification of Islam is a duty and contempt of the Religion, is vain. God holds them in contempt, for He says 'keep them under subjection."[2]

It is not, however, the common run of Muslim rulers that arrests our attention in this study; it is those few exceptions who tried to rise above the distinctions of creed, race and colour with the object of lifting the people from the slough of despondency, treat them as humans, and make them happy, that deserve notice.

One such ruler was Muhammad Ibn Kasim the first Arab Muslim to conquer Sindh in 710 A.C. Writing about him, E. B. Havel remarks: "Kasim allowed the Brahmins to repair their temples and to follow their own religion as before, placed the collection of revenue in their hands and employed them in continuing the traditional system of local administration."[3] But Kasim's rule was short-lived and the Turkish

Muslims who captured power four centuries later in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries lacked the virtues of Muslim liberalism. Among them a lone figure, Mohammad bin Tughluq (1325-51 A.C.) stands prominently above the rest for his noble-mindedness and unprejudiced views. He was not irreligious as most of his contemporary Muslim writers accuse him. But he refused to accept the advice of orthodox divines. He was keen to support *ahli-manaqulat* (the rationalists) against the *ahli-manqulat* (the traditionalists). He did not succumb to blind reverence for religion, rose above bigotry of the age and was guided by a humanist spirit in most of his decisions. He respected men of free thought and independent judgement of whatever class or community they belonged. He wanted to integrate the Hindus and the Muslims on the secure basis of their potential faculty to reason and argue.

Muhammad bin Tughluq tried to apply his enlightened views in dealing with his subjects both Muslims and non-Muslims. Some of his plans were premature, fantastic and ill-conceived but born of good intentions. Tughluq was far in advance of his time and therefore his endeavours met with defeat and ended in disaster. He was unable to remove the mass ignorance and cope with the tremendous opposition which his revolutionary ideas and non-conformist methods generated. He lacked the organizational ability which was the *sine qua non* for advancing his laudable schemes and he was impatient, rash, cruel and tactless. "He had brought", says Lane Poole, "exceptional abilities and a highly cultivated mind to the task of governing the greatest Indian empire that had so far been known, and he had failed stupendously. It was a tragedy of high intentions self-defeated."[4]

The task of reunifying the subcontinent and integrating the diverse element of the population was taken up by the Mughals who conquered the country in the sixteenth century. At least two Mughal monarchs, Jalal-uddin Akbar (1556-1605) and Alamgir Aurangzeb (1658-1707) stand out for their original views to raise the people sunk in the mire of superstitions, ignorance and poverty. In the long dark age the Mughal rule stands out conspicuously as a pleasant interlude.

Jalal-uddin Akbar was illiterate but intelligent and generous. He was only twelve years old when he came to the throne at the death, by accident, of his father, Humayun. Early in his career Akbar realised that in order to stabilise political conditions and to build a strong united India it was essential that social evils should be eradicated and the Hindus and Muslims brought closer to each other. He wanted to resolve the doctrinal differences between the two religious communities. He gathered a number of learned men holding different views round himself. With a keen intellect and an inquisitive mind, he tried to grasp the underlying truths contained in the religious texts of various faiths. By having arranged in the palace regular and extensive debates among the intellectuals belonging to different faiths Akbar endeavoured to evolve an eclectic philosophy containing the good points of all credal doctrines. Evidently he wanted to produce a fusion of the Hindu and Muslim cultures, a big stride to unify the Indians and bring the subcontinent under one rule.

In pursuance of this aim, the great Mughal married a number of Rajput princesses without forcing them to embrace Islam, thereby preparing the ground for creation of an Indian nation with families consisting of members following different religions.

Akbar also laid the foundation of his administration on the principles of reason, justice and fairplay. He abolished the practice of enslavement of war prisoners and issued a *firman* (edict) by which soldiers were forbidden to molest the wives and daughters of vanquished enemies. He abolished pilgrims tax and *jazia* (poll tax) levied on the Hindus under the Muslim rule. The practice of sati was discouraged and an edict issued that no woman should be burnt against her will. He also banned child marriage and encouraged remarriage of Hindu widows.

This is not the place to recount the multifarious reforms that Akbar introduced in politics and administration of the country. What is important for our purpose is that he fostered an intellectual outlook unrestricted by the prejudices of the age. And more than that, it is remarkable how energetically and sincerely he endeavoured to translate his lofty ideals into

practice in his personal life. Akbar's greatness rests on his moral courage to proceed ahead, despite orthodox opposition, in implementing the policy of justice for all people throughout his life. It was by the force generated by this policy which enabled him to unify the major part of India and make the people live in peace and, more or less, in contentment.

Unfortunately Akbar failed in both of his main aims. He could neither unite the Hindus and the Muslims nor build Indian nationalism on firm foundations. At the time of his death in 1605 India remained in these two respects where it was when he became the ruler in 1556. It is true that in wishing to raise Indian people as an integrated force, the emperor was sincere and left nothing undone, but it must be recognized that his analysis of the communal problem was unsound and therefore the remedy he applied to solve it was also faulty. He did not realize that there could be no fusion of reactionary Brahminism and anti-revolutionary Islam. There was no common ground between the two. The Hindus and Muslims could not come closer to each other as long as they adhered to their respective faiths however shorn the two religions might have been of their dogmatic frills. The only way to unify the Indians would have been to rally them round the banner of Rationalism and leave the two religions alone. What the divines of Islam and the Pandits of Hinduism continued tenaciously to hold after the prolonged discussions in the palace at Fatehpur Sikri was no less pernicious for the healthy growth of Indian nationalism, than what they were prepared to shed under the inspiration of the enlightened emperor.

It would appear that in the later period of his life Akbar dimly perceived this, and pushing the two religions aside found a new philosophical school, *Din-i-Ilahi* (divine faith) which indicates his growing secular outlook though he was still far away from adopting reason as his sole guide in life. The new doctrine laid stress on the worship of nature in the form of the most luminous sun, light and fire which Akbar considered as symbols of divine power. Strictly speaking, Din-i-Ilahi was not a religion but a device of Akbar to unite the people, make them more tolerant towards each other and thereby to firmly establish the foundations of the State. "As in the Sangha of the

Buddha", writes Havel, "there were four paths or four degrees, within the order (Din-I-Ilahi). The bhaktas (devotees) of the first degree were those who were ready to sacrifice to the Padshah all their worldly goods; those of the second degree must be prepared to sacrifice their life in his service; those of the third were expected to entrust their honour to his keeping and those of the fourth and highest degree were to accept the Padshah's religious views as their own."[5]

The founding of Din-i-Illahi was a big step to secularize Indian politics but it fell short of the requirements for achieving the aim; the approach still continued to be essentially religious and it was too personal. Though Havel says that "the Indian people, with their deep religious sense, willingly assented to the doctrine that 'a most just and a most wise and most God-fearing king' was fit to be the spiritual leader of his subjects and were eager to be enrolled in the order of Din-i-Illahi", Vincent Smith believes that the order failed even in the King's lifetime.

Though an absolute ruler wielding unbridled authority, Akbar did not like to impose his opinions on others by application of the rod. Like Ashoka, he believed that an opponent could be converted by persuasion and discussion, never through coercion. But unlike the Mauryan emperor he could not enrol a large of even his intimate associates as member of Din-i-Illahi. There were only eighteen members of the order and only one of them, Birbal, was a Hindu. "It is greatly to Akbar's credit." contends Havell in defence, "that though he often tried to influence his most valued officials by argument he always respected the 'conscientious objector' and never used his authority tyrannically to compel anyone to accept membership of his order. Akbar frequently banished from his dominions any sheikhs, mullas, fakirs, and others whom he considered to be dangerous to the State, but never on account of their religious beliefs." Din-i-Illahi, in any case, died along with its founder.

But Akbar has continued to inspire the Indians after his death. His theory has been readily accepted and revived by Hindu politicians. Though his efforts to build Indian nationalism on the basis of closer affinity of the Hindus and Muslims met with no particular success and he realized the

shortcomings on this political philosophy in his advanced age, the idea has been, most strangely, revived in contemporary India by the Congress leaders. We shall have to say more about it when we come to discuss the present-day problems but here it would suffice to note that Akbar has been eulogized for being the god-father of Indian nationalism as conceived by the Congress leaders.

Jahangir (1605-27 A.C.) and Shahjahan (1627-58 A.C.) who succeeded Akbar had neither talent nor ambition to discover a new philosophy for tackling the huge social problem. The former was more interested in encouraging the arts, laying out parks and growing flowers and the later in constructing edifices with new styles of architecture unmindful of the rising tensions demanding attention.

Alamgir Aurangzeb who ascended the throne in 1658 after imprisoning his father, Shahjahan, proved to be almost as remarkable as Akbar. He entertained similar aims as his great grandfather though his ways, means and methods for achieving them were quite different and in certain respects contradictory.

Unlike Akbar, Aurangzeb was a man of wide education and vast experience when he came to power. He saw no use in bringing about reconciliation between Hinduism as he saw it practised in his time and Islam as he understood it. He considered this to be a futile endeavour and an impossible task. He had deep and abiding faith in the righteousness of the Islamic philosophy as taught by Prophet Muhammad and practised by four caliphs. He was convinced that by faithfully and scrupulously following the doctrines laid down in the Quran he would be able to establish a perfect society on earth making people belonging to different classes and religious persuasions, God-fearing and contented. Regardless of criticism and reactions of others, he devoutedly stood by his convictions and ruled the country with an iron hand.

"From his early days", observes the Hindu historian Ishwari Prasad, "he was known for his courage and military talent of which he had given many proofs during his father's reign. He was a born soldier with a rare capacity for organisation and discipline. His presence of mind and coolness of temper in the greatest crisis took his opponents by surprise. In diplomacy

and statecraft he had no equals and the most experienced ministers of the State recognized his strength of will and respected his judgement."[6]

Deriving a lesson from the failure of Akbar's plan of Hindu-Muslim unity and Din-i-Illahi, and inspired by the achievement of early Saracens who carried the message of peace to many non-Muslim societies by their simplicity, truth and social doctrines, Aurangzeb hit upon the idea of revitalising Islam and thus becoming the saviour of India. He might well have succeeded in this but he lacked forbearance, patience and tolerance, the virtues which distinguished early Arab conquerors and which were conspicuously absent in Islam as practised by Muslim rulers in India, not excluding Aurangzeb.

Remarkably, Aurangzeb started the implementation of his plan with himself. Even his critics have admitted that in his personal character the pious autocrat followed in the footsteps of the Prophet and his caliphs. Says Ishwari Prasad: "He slept little, shunned gaudy clothes and regulated his conduct according to holy law. He made skull caps to earn his daily bread and looked upon the treasury of the state as a sacred trust. He administered justice with great strictness and made no distinction between the rich and the poor. He cherished a high ideal of kingship. Even engaged in the business of the State, he knew no leisure or rest and acquired the knowledge of administrative details which none of his contemporaries could excel". The historian proceeds; "The emperor was a great lover of justice. He sat in the Hall of the Public Audience (Darbar-i-Am) to dispense justice. He heard the petitions, examined the aggrieved persons himself, and afterwards redressed the wrong on the spot."[7]

Aurangzeb was harsh towards the upper classes, moneyed people, landlords, and, of Brahmins but he was interested in the welfare of the peasantry and labouring millions. The officers were frequently ordered to be just and humane towards the toilers of land and if any *chowdhury*, *muggadam* or *patwari* practised oppression he was punished. Not a penny in excess of State demand was to be taken and the provincial satraps were ordered to report on the loyalty and honesty of collectors. He abolished several taxes which affected the poorer people of India. "We

may read Aurangzeb's ideal of enlightened kingship" says Lane Poole, "in his reply to one of the nobles who remonstrated with him on his incessant application to affairs of State : 'I was sent into the world by Providence', he said, 'to live and labour, not for myself, but for others; it is my duty not to think of my own happiness, except so far as it is inseparably connected with the happiness of my people. It is the repose and prosperity of my subjects that it behoves me to consult; nor are these to be sacrificed to anything besides the demands of justice, the maintenance of royal authority, and the security of State."[8]

But Aurangzeb failed to bring the same spirit of truth and and fairness to bear upon his dealings with public affairs. He was narrow minded and short-sighted in dealing with non-Muslim. He could not inspire the confidence of the Hindus in his sense of impartiality and justice.

Much of what Hindu writers have said about Aurangzeb's policy of persecution of non-Muslims and demolition of religious edifices is an exaggeration. The Emperor's virtues are mostly overlooked and his failings unduly highlighted. There is meagre evidence that Aurangzeb wantonly destroyed temples. On the plea that certain religious centres were used for anti-State activities he no doubt ordered their demolition which infuriated the Brahmins and added fuel to the fire of upper class Hindu disaffection. "Aurangzeb has been unduly denigrated", says Percival Spear. "He succeeded not because he was more cruel but because he was more efficient and more skilled in the current game of statecraft with its background of dissimulation."[9]

The distinguished historian, Sir Jadunath Sarkar credits Aurangzeb with saying : "what connection have earthly affairs with religion and what right have administrative works to meddle with bigotry ? For you in your religion and for me in mine."

Aurangzeb's policy brought him at once into clash with orthodox sections of the Hindus, particularly the Brahmins, who must have seen danger from him to their spiritual hegemony and vested interests. When the Emperor rescued a wretched, helpless woman at Agra from being burnt as sati, the Brahmins complained that it was interference in their religion. Remonstrating that if to burn a living woman was their religion not to

allow such heinous act was his faith and if the Brahmins are free to follow their holy book he must follow his own scripture, he dismissed the complaint. Then he issued a *firman* that in all lands under Mughal control never again should the officials allow a Hidu woman to be consigned to flames.

Not unexpectedly the Hindu leaders opposed Aurangzeb and met in secret places to hatch conspiracies to topple down his government. Most of his time was spent in subduing ambitious Shivaji, the chief who raised the banner of revolt against Mughal rule in Maharashtra.

Despite the fierce opposition of the upper class Hindus, Aurangzeb succeeded in maintaining order in his empire. He extended its areas by conquest and India was never before united, geographically and politically, by the Muslim monarchs as under his rule. "His word was effective from beyond Madras in the South, to Bengal in the west, and Kabul and Badakshan in the north-west."[10]

But Aurangzeb met with no better fate than did Akbar in laying the foundations of an Indian nation because he was passionately attached to Islam which had abandoned its revolutionary role and could not be acceptable even to those down-trodden Hindus who were economically exploited by their leaders and socially and spiritually crushed by Brahminism. Aurangzeb failed to understand that in a multi-cultural society insistence on the observance of the dogmas and tenets of a particular creed long past its revolutionary prime, could bring neither solidarity nor everlasting peace. During the closing days of his life, conscious of his failure, he poured out his troubled heart to his sons in long letters. "I have not done well by the country or its people"! he confessed. "My years have gone by profitless. God has been in my heart, yet my darkened eyes have not recognized His light...Nothing brought I into this world, but I carry away with me the burden of my sins."[11] Not long after his death in 1707 the Mughal Empire declined and fell to pieces.

Just as the Hindu writers have called the Gupta period as the Golden Prime of India, several Muslim historians have said that Aurangzeb's rule was the Golden Age in Indian history. The claim is difficult to entertain. In the whole

Mughal period individual counted for nothing; his life, honour and possessions were at the mercy of the ruler. In a long dismal age it was indubitably a pleasant interlude but no more than that. Neither the liberalism and generosity of Akbar nor the simplicity and personal integrity of Aurangzeb freed the Indian society from the clutches of neo-Brahmin reaction which continued to dominate as before. The breeze of goodness soon passed over after Aurangzeb and the subcontient was enveloped by thickening gloom.

27

Anarchy and Callousness

AURANGZEB was the last of the strong Mughal emperors, and as the central authority lost its hold on the country under his successors, local governors in different parts of the empire began to assert their independence and assume sovereignty; petty chieftains and even daring robbers carved out kingdoms for themselves. Unceasing battles ensued among the upstart rulers who felt jealous or afraid of each other. In the forty years that followed the death of Aurangzeb "a succession of nominal sovereigns sunk in indolence and debauchery, sauntered away life in secluded palaces, chewing *bhang*, fondling concubines and listening to bufoons."[1] When the Mughals fell, there was no organised system to take their place. Some form of government did survive in various provinces but they became tools of force and oppression. Any man strong enough to bully others did so until someone else stronger replaced him. In some areas, where efficient rulers had been able to maintain strong and tolerant control, their deaths were inevitably followed by return to disorder and anarchy; the general situation was one of unchecked oppression by armed robbers, disloyal troops and lustful rulers.

The days were long past when there were large prosperous towns and flourishing villages. Travernier, describing what he saw in the course of his travels just after the death of the last Great Mughal, has remarked that "even in the smallest villages, rice,

flour, butter, milk, beans and other vegetables, sugar and other sweetmeats, dry and liquid, can be produced in abundance."[2] But now with the decline of the Mughals the peasantry could raise enough only to pay the king's share and keep their own families at subsistence level. In times of drought which were not infrequent, towns usually lost three quarters of their population, the lands remained uncultivated and villages were simply ruined. "The only activity was of the tax-gatherer and robber who continued their work even in famine conditions."

The population all over the country was thinly spread for there were few large towns. All the historical cities including the capital of Delhi had fallen into decay. The peasants in the rural areas lived in fortified villages, cultivating patches of land nearer to their homes and often led to bloody quarrels and arson. Robbers infested large parts of the country and travellers without armed escorts were murdered even in broad daylight. There were hardly any courts of justice and, generally speaking, village headmen and caste elders settled disputes without the aid of any outside authority. "Crime was to some extent regulated by the payment of blackmail", writes Philip Woodruff, "or insurance to certain recognized criminal tribes, hereditary trade unions, who undertook to provide village watchman and to warn off unauthorized wrong-doers. Criminal justice was mainly a matter of district officer's whim, the punishment being death, mutilation, flogging or fine. Civil justice was a matter of arranging arbitration, the headman in the village might arbitrate himself, appoint an arbitrator or refer to a board of arbitrators. There might be an appeal to the district office, or he might initiate arbitration. Law was a matter of custom and tradition, interpreted according to circumstances of the case and the taste of the arbitrators."[3]

The rulers and the ruled had lost all touch with each other. Subordinate officers would go round in the name of the king to collect whatever they could get from the peasants. The peasants on their part, reluctant to part with anything earned with sweat of their brow, fortified themselves behind mud walls. The rule of force was universal. The subordinate officers handed over as little as they could to their superiors. Still less reached the royal treasury.

The brunt of disorder and lawlessness had to be borne by the lower castes, labouring classes, the peasantry and traders who formed the backbone of society. In the era of the Buddhist Revolution toilers on land had to pay barely one-sixth of the produce as State revenue. During the post-Buddhist Hindu period it was raised to one-fourth or more. In certain cases as much as nine-tenths of the produce was appropriated by Hindu kings. The Great Mughals fixed it at one-third and their successors enhanced it to a higher level affording the peasantry little chance to save for lean days when the harvests were bad. It led to the outbreak of a succession of famines which occurred periodically in the eighteenth century. The pressure of taxation and recurrence of famines gave rise to general disruption of rural economy, civil commotions, ruthless suppression and constant shifts in population. Merchants and shopkeepers were often persecuted on false charges and their property was confiscated. Craftsmen were virtually made slaves and forced to work for him by any man wielding authority. Trade and industry were crushed by taxation.

The celebrated Maratha hero, Shivaji, rose in revolt against the Mughals. Born in 1627 he grew up as a youthful warrior with great ambition for power, dominion and prestige. Being a capable organizer, he rallied a large number of young men round him who formed his army. Then attacking places in the neighbourhood he captured, in 1665, Javali, a small State, which was followed by occupation of Raigarh next year.

Advancing further, Shivaji soon came in clash with Sultan of Bijapur who sent Afzal Khan against him in 1659. In a prearranged private meeting Shivaji suddenly attacked and killed the Khan causing Bijapur armies to run helter-skelter. Emboldened by the success, he raided the nearest Mughal territory. He launched upon a guerrilla warfare harassing the imperial armies. In 1664 he even sacked Surat. But he was no match for Aurangzeb and therefore he sought safety in coming to terms with the Emperor which resulted in his signing the treaty of Purandhar in 1665. He went to attend the Delhi Court but was not treated as politely and as well as he had expected. He gave vent to his feelings and was kept under surveillance in a royal guest house. He ran away under disguise

and reaching home raised the banner of revolt against the Mughal Emperor.

Imbued by a spirit of religious revivalism and with an indomitable will, Shivaji annexed one fort after another and, despite the attacks of the Mughal armies whose commanders were divided among themselves, he was at least able to found a fairly large kingdom in Maharashtra. In 1674, he celebrated his coronation with great pomp and splendour. He died in 1680 at the age of 53.

Shivaji was a born leader and an administrative genius. Dexterous and wily, determined and dedicated, he fought under the standard of militant Hinduism wielding all the weapons in the armoury of neo-Brahminism against Muslim monarchs. He was passionately devoted to the Brahmin culture and no less to the land of his birth. An autocrat who ruled over his subjects he had eight ministers (*ashta pradhan*) all Brahmins, to assist him. His judiciary followed the Brahmin scriptures to administer justice which was primitive in nature.

In his work *Shivaji and His Times* Sir Jadunath Sircar considers Shivaji as "the last constructive genius and nation-builder the Hindu race has produced", but, at the same time the great historian points out certain defects in his character frequently referring to Maratha blackmail. Non-Hindus have adversely commented upon his treacherous assassination of Afzal Khan as a blot on Shivaji's name though the Hindus who hold that everything is fair in war against *Malechhas*, have nothing but praise for him for it.

Though Shivaji is known to have defended the honour of Muslim women in distress, treated Muslim saints with respect and granted lands and annuities to Muslim shrines, he, by the very nature of his adventures, came to be looked upon as a symbol of past Hindu glory and also as an anti-Muslim hero.

At the decline of the Mughal empire the successors of Shivaji advanced as a challenging power with the Hindu shibboleth of "Har Har Mahadev". Making a conscious bid for succession to the fading Mughal rule, they laid waste the central and northern India causing terror and spreading disorder in the whole area. Wherever they went they left death and destruction behind them. Whenever the kettle drums of

Marathas were heard "the peasant threw his bag of rice on his shoulder, hid his small savings in his girdle and fled with his wife and children to the mountains or the jungles, to the milder neighbourhood of the hyena and the tiger."[4]

The wretched Indian people "were becoming a masterless multitude swaying to and fro in the political storm, and clinging to any power, natural or supernatural, that seemed likely to protect them."[5] All that was needed to bring down the dying central authority of the Mughals was a sharp push. This was given in 1739 A.C. not by the Hindu princes but by the Persian ruler, Nadir Shah. "Nadir Shah sacked Delhi and according to an eye-witness the streets were strewn with corpses like a garden with weeds. The city was reduced to ashes and looked like a burnt plain."[6]

Between 1748 and 1762 north-west India was repeatedly invaded by the Afghans, while central and northern India were laid waste by the Maratha depredations.

In the Maratha territory the administration was designed only to raise revenue and the armies of the Maratha chiefs behaved like organized bands of robbers. The revenue was derived by direct taxation. From neighbouring States, not directly under their control, the Marathas squeezed protection money called *chauth*, literally one fourth of the revenue. Since Shivaji's days the Marathas exacted chauth and an extra tenth called *sardeshmukhi*, from areas which they overawed without actually occupying them. By such methods the Marathas not only ruined their own territories but also much of the surrounding areas. Cities which had once been important centres of commerce, industry and culture fell into decay and their citizens and craftsmen roamed about in search of security. The public buildings, palaces, tombs and mosques of the Mughal emperors were allowed to crumble, the famous Taj Mahal was used as a private residence by a Maratha chief.

No sooner were the Maratha generals able to bring a big part of central and northern India under their sway, than they started fighting with each other for achieving the upper hand or for greater share in war booty. "It is customary to say", observes Thomas and Garret, "that the Marathas lost the empire of India by their wars with the British as the century

closed, they lost it no less in these internecine conflicts at its beginning."[7]

In the prevalent anarchy chaturvarnya (four caste-system) of the Gita played an effective role. A man's loyalty was to the caste to which he belonged rather than to the Hindu community as a whole and to the state not at all. His relationship to the state was always subordinate to that of his caste. R.C. Majumdar, lamenting the lack of any sense of patriotism at the time, observes : "The Indian ruling chiefs, even those belonging to the same community, helped the British against one another. The Nizam and the Marathas Joined the British against Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan of Mysore. The Peshwas joined the British against the other Maratha leaders. The Marathas felt no scruple in crushing the Rajputs, and fighting the Sikhs; the Muslim rulers and chiefsfought amongst themselves and against Muslim rulers; and all this went on when the British were consolidating their power and were well on the way to conquer the whole of the country. So it is hardly an exaggeration to say that, politically speaking, there was no India at the beginning of the nineteenth century; it was a mere conglomeration of states."[8]

The first province to be conquered by the British was Bengal. Describing the conditions there in the second half of the eighteenth century Sir Jadu Nath says : "The country's administration had become hopelessly dishonest and inefficient, and the mass of the people had been reduced to the deepest poverty, ignorance and moral degeneration by a small, selfish, proud and unworthy ruling class. Imbecile leechers filled the throne, the family of Ali Verdi did not produce a single son worthy to be called a man, and women were even worse than the men. Sadists like Siraj and Miran made even the highest subject live in constant terror. The Army was rotten and honey-combed with treason...Religion had become handmaid of vice and folly."[9]

The condition of the low castes had increasingly deteriorated and become unbearable by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Untouchability had touched its peak "The doors of education were closed on the Untouchables. They were not

allowed to bear arms. They could not earn enough money or acquire wealth in any manner. Even in the matter of speaking words, they were not allowed free choice. They should not use decent cultured language but instead were required to use crude language in order to help identification. They had to live outside the villages and far away from the towns, in caves, on the trees or huts or tents made of tattered cloth. They could not own animals other than pigs, dogs and donkeys. They were not allowed to eat decent wholesome food, nor allowed to wear decent clothes. In certain regions they were not allowed to put on loin cloth which went below the knee-cap. They would enter the villages only during the day and had to return to their huts before sunset when the shadow grows longest. They were branded as untouchables, unseeables and unapproachables. Even their shadow contaminated the pious."[10] In Madras the untouchables were not allowed to speak directly to the magistrate standing in the court. An untouchable prisoner had to stand outside the court and give his statement to a touchable who in turn passed it on to the Brahmin official and he relayed it to the honourable magistrate.[11]

If fellow-feeling among the Hindus was lacking due to enmity caused by caste distinctions, communal disunity between the Hindus and Muslims was the result of religious differences. "In all matter affecting life and culture", says Majumdar, "the Hindus and the Muslims lived in almost two water-tight compartments. Unlike other foreign conquerors—Greeks, Shakas, Kushans and Huns in India, or Anglo-Saxons, Danes and Normans in England—the Mussalmans were never fused with the conquered pepole and there was no prospect of it even in distant future."[12] Giving reason for the failure of social fusion, the historian adds: "There is no doubt that the upper class Hindus treated the Muslim masses in many respect like the low castes of their own society."[13]

Reference has already been made in a previous chapter to a number of social evils which afflicted Indian people after rejuvenation of Brahminism and its emergence in the form of Hinduism. As the dark age lengthened and anarchy spread the evils became vicious in nature and some more were added to the existing ones.

Derived from religious texts, ancient as well as medieval, superstitions abounded. Cruel tortures were habitually inflicted on innocent men and helpless children in the name of *dharma.* Human sacrifices, first suggested as a ritual in the *Brahmanas* became a practice particularly in the regions now known as Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Orissa. The victim was called *meriah* and had to be purchased at a price. "Once bought the meriah might be kept for years a servant of the village, well treated, but sooner or later, to end a drought, to banish caterpillars or locusts, to bring back game which had wandered away or simply as a precaution to ensure fertility and happiness, as grass in lined every three years-sooner or later the day of sacrifice would come."[14]

It is true that the abominable practice mostly obtained among the backward classes and primitive tribes much given to drunkenness and to worship of strange and evil-natured godlings. But members of the upper classess were known either to abet or connive at these sacrifices. And the Brahmins encouraged it. The ruler of Angul, a state in Orissa, was suspected of aiding the meriah sacrifices even after the British rule was well established.[15]

But there were other ritual killing, much more sinister, indulged in by educated, prosperous and high caste Hindus. Among them was offering of children to the gods as sacrifice to secure fulfilment of a desire. "A wife without children could vow her first child to destruction, trusting that thus appeased the gods would grant more. The child would after be kept till it was seven or nine years old; then it would go to the crocodiles of the Ganges or the sharks at Sagar point. It was a Hindu practice encouraged by the Brahmins."[16]

Slavery was not altogether unknown in ancient India. But in the medieval times the poverty-stricken, starving and helpless young boys and girls were caught by men wielding some authority and either made domestic serfs or sold to foreigners as bond-slaves. By the eighteenth century the slave trade developed into a lucrative business.

We have seen that after the defeat of the Buddhist Revolution the Brahmin lawgivers reduced the status of women making them virtually slaves of men, be they fathers, husbands or sons.

In the times now under consideration women began to be treated as chattels and lost even the right to live. It would appear incredible today but it is a fact that the most chivalrous class of the Hindus, the Rajputs, resorted to the practice of murdering their own daughters soon after they were born. Since no Rajput liked to give his daughter in marriage to a Rajput of lower caste and for a marriage in higher caste big dowry had to be paid, Rajputs preferred to murder their own male progeny lest they shall remain unmarried throughout their lives which was taken to be a great shame. In backward societies and low cultures an unmarried grown-up woman is believed to be unchaste. The Rajputs therefore allowed very few of their female children to live. The systematic murder of daughters was the duty of the female apartment in the family. The mother was usually to serve as the killer at the behest of her husband. She either did not feed the child or "rubbed a little opium on the nipple of her breasts" which did the revolting job. What a pang it must have been to the unfortunate mother.

Maharaja Dalip Singh, son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, confessed that "he had actually seen when he was a child at Lahore, his sisters put into a sack and thrown into river."[17]

In Gujarat alone, it has been estimated, no fewer than 20,000 female infants were destroyed every year in the early years of the nineteenth century until the evil practice was stopped by legislation.

The worst and the most hateful evil was the burning of defenceless widow along with the dead body of her husband on funeral pyre. It was a wide-spread practice followed in all parts of the subcontinent. It will be recalled that the Hindu law codes (*smritis*) particularly the later ones, which were promulgated after the appearance of the Gita unabashedly supported the practice as pious and meritorious. As already referred to, the famous Brahmin historian, Kalhana, who lived in the twelfth century, has narrated with zest cases of sati in Kashmir and denounced those sensitive men who opposed the practice. Hindu writers of the later centuries have described the shuddering events with glee and of course with full approval.

William Carey, a Christian missionary. is known to have given Lord Wellesly, the British Governor-General, the figure of 438 widows burnt in Calcutta and its suburbs in 1803. R.C.

Majumdar has recorded that "in Calcutta and its neighbourhood alone there were 253, 289 and 441 cases of sati, respectively in 1815, 1816 and 1817."[18]

The Hindu leaders and religious heads contest that the widows were voluntarily embracing the flames out of their love for departed husbands and devotion to Dharma. The statement contained not an iota of truth; only the heartlessness of the Hindus following the Gita doctrine of "Murder with Impunity" and utter loss of their sense of humanity allowed them to encourage the heinous custom.

Giving evidence before a committe appointed by the British Government to report on the practice of sati, Mr. Ever, the Superintendent of Police in Lower Bengal, reported : "A widow who would turn with natural instinctive horror from the first hint of sharing her husband's pile, will be at length gradually brought to pronounce a reluctant consent because distracted with grief at the event, without one friend to advice or protect her, she is little prepared to oppose the surrounding crowd of hungry Brahmins and interested relations...In the state of confusion a few hours pass and the widow is burnt before she has had time to think of the subject. Should utter indifference for her husband, and superior sense, enable her to preserve her judgement, and resist the argument of those about her, it will avail her little—the people will not be disppointed of their show, and the entire population of a village will turn out to assist in dragging her to the bank of the river, and in keeping her on the pile."[19]

No woman would be prepared to suffer the horrible death. But her consent was obtained by blandishments, threats, cajolery and, last of all, an appeal to blind sense of dharma. Her death would bring, she was told, honour to all her family and her husband would earn aeons of blessedness with her in heaven. Reading the horrifying details of scores of reported cases, no cultured person can refrain from shedding tears and feeling disgusted with the religion and society that enjoined, allowed and tolerated a practice like sati. "In Bengal, she was usually tied to the corpse, often already putrid; men stood by with poles to push her back in case the bonds should burn through and the victim, scorched and maimed, should struggle free.

She could hope for no pity from her own people. There is a case reported when a woman did succeed, in the dark of a rainy night, in escaping from the pyre and hiding herself among some brushwood. But they found her. Her son dragged her out and in spite of her pleading tied her hand and foot and threw her back into the flames."[20]

The measure of the moral degradation of the Hindu society was the popularity of the inhuman rite. The number of women burnt alive at his funeral had in many native states been the criterian of a prince's success in life. When a prince died there was something like an approaching holocaust or carnage. Eighty-fore women died with Raja Buddha Singh of Brundi 1780, sixtyfour with Ajit Singh of Jodhpur, and numbers in the neighbourhood of twenty were usual. At the death of Raja of Idar, even after the prohibition of the practice by the British government, no less than seven queens, two concubines and four female slaves were cremated along with the chief's dead body. In the Punjab under Sikh rule wives and concubines were burnt in large numbers at the death of Kishori Singh and Basanta Singh. Suchet Singh's death was reported to have been followed by the burning of ten wives and 300 concubines.[21]

In utter disregard of their woeful plight and gruesome end widows were produced in large numbers by several pernicious customs and conventions. In Bengal, for example, *kulin* Brahmins grown grey married fifty, sixty or even more teen-aged girls. The girls could not marry anyone but a kulin however advanced in age. The ceremony was held just to remove their maidenhood which was considered a disgrace. And when the old husband died he left a bunch of young widows behind.

In the early centuries of Brahminism, young virgin girls began to be dedicated to temples as singers and dancers to please the deity. This became a lifelong service and with passage of time the practice was recognised as nothing but prostitution in the name, and under protection, of religion. The evil spread to all parts of the country. In Madras alone the number of such fallen women exceeded two hundred thousand by the end of the eighteenth century.

Though women were greater sufferers the infliction of cruelty was not confined to them; men too had their share of it and, let it

be reitereted, in the name of dharma. It is not possible to enumerate, much less describe, the various rites and rituals which entailed torture. But mention may be made of one or two. The *chakre-puja* (hook swinging) was one such barbarous practice. Men were tied to a rope attached to a wheel and rapidly whirled round to earn merit by thus appeasing the gods. In some cases iron spikes were inserted into the different limbs of their bodies. It was a sort of age-old tapas. Not unoften the rope snapped and the wretched man was thrown away at a distance reduced to a lump. In any case the man was all but dead by the time the ritual was over. In Puri religious fanatics cast themselves before the car of Lord Jagannath and were crushed to death as another form of tapas. Violence and torture became a part of life sufferable because sanctified by the scripture. To popularize tapas thousands of vagabonds, donned in religious garb, thronged the land. "Strongest of all perhaps", says Percival Spear, "was the appearance of armed religious ascetics in a land where non-violent ideas were widespread and associated with religious devotion. They went about in bands variously described as nangas, bairagis, sanyasis and gosains."[21]

In some parts of the country men suffering from infirmity in old age or from irremediable disease such as leprosy were buried alive.

To die on the banks of the holy Ganga or any other sacred river is considered virtuous by the Hindus. Therefore, when an old woman seemed likely to die she was hurried to water's edge. She should be very fortunate to die as expected but if she survived and recovered from illness she was not allowed to return home. She was either suffocated with the sacred water or, if need be, with mud. "Callousness to human suffering, arising out of blind adherence to old practices", observes R.C. Majumdar concluding his survey of social conditions in India at the beginning of nineteenth century, "seems to have been the order of the day."[22]

Any picture of India after the downfall of Mughals would be incomplete without mentioning the activities of thugs. A gang would set out in the autumn and winter seasons and murder anything upto a thousand unsuspecting travellers

before the ruffians returned to their homes by spring. Such gangs, consisting in all of over ten thousand members, functioned mostly in northern and central India. "The killing was done by a handkerchief, a square cloth, in a corner of which was knotted a silver coin consecrated to the goddess Kali. The knotted coin made a grip for the left hand; the free hand went round the culprit's neck, then a quick twist, the knuckles turned in and in skilful hands the victim would be dead before he reached the ground."[23]

Was thuggery solely motivated by personal gain as nationalist apologists protest today or was it encouraged by Hindu beliefs ? W.H. Sleeman who worked as Director to Suppress Thug Associations in the middle of the last century should know better. From a study of unreserved communications of the thugs he found that "there is not among them one who doubts the divine origin of the system of the thuggee not one who doubts that he and all who have followed the trade of murder with the prescribed rites and observances, were acting under the immediate orders and auspices of Goddess Devee, Durga, Kalee or Bhawanee, as she is differently called, and consequently there is not one who feels the slightest remorse for the murders which he may, in the course of his vocation, have perpetrated or assisted in perpetrating. A thug considers the persons murdered precisely in the light of victims offered up to the Goddess."[24]

Philip Wodruff explanining the philosophy of the thugs says : "It was not plain crime for gain. Destruction of life was the first object, the booty was the devotee's earthly reward, granted him by the goddess. The thugs told how the first god had taken to himself two colleagues, one to create and one to destroy, hoping thus to maintain balance in the population of the world. This though crudely put is orthodox Hinduism. But finding that the forces of destruction were losing, the goddess Kali who is also Bhavani, who is also Durga, who is also Parvati, the wife of Shiva, came down to earth and taught the thugs their craft, promising them her special protection. They believed then that they were carrying out a divine mission and that as a reward, a heaven of their own, would be reserved for them."[25]

Another sect of free booters who resorted to depradations, looting, plunder, rape and arson in the name of dharma was that of the Pindaris. Initially these well-built and strong-armed men were patronized by the Peshwas as auxiliaries in their army. Later, they joined the service of other Maratha rulers like the Scindias and the Holkars as also of Nawab of Bhopal. But when with the ascendancy of the British suzerainty, the powers of the native princes were curtailed and curbed, the Pindaris were thrown out of employment; they formed themselves into a formidable force of desperadoes and marauders indulging in the crimes of manhandling, torturing and murdering peaceful citizens. They struck terror in the hearts of the people wherever they appeared in central India and deep in the South.

By middle of the last century the Pindari menace had turned into a cancerous growth; every year thousands suffered at their cruel hands and Pindari became another name for a detestable miscreant.

There were several other evils of similar nature corroding the Indian society but being confined to smaller areas and not as well-planned may be left unmentioned. The question arises why did such misfortunes befall the country. R.C. Majumdar answers : "There was undoubtedly a general deterioration of Hindu Society. Long subjection to alien rule, lack of contact with the progressive forces of the world, and a stereotyped education leading to knowledge which was based upon blind faith impervious to reason-all these told upon the mental and moral outlook of men and society.[26]

Other Hindu historians have written in the same strain, but no one has tried to probe deeper and hit at the real reason of the appaling callousness. Though every social evil, big or small, can be traced to the beliefs taught by the Brahmin dharma paradoxically it is contended that the Indians suffered because they forgot or ignored the high principles of dharma. That is not correct. The fact is that during the entire period of darkness the Hindus followed the doctrines of holy scriptures. Lack of fellow-feeling, loss of self-confidence, caste enmity, callousness and docile submission to cruel authority and other such traits of character were born of devotion to neo-

Brahminism. The imposition of foreign rule, severence of connection with the rest of the world, and stereotyped educational system impervious to reason which are said to be the causes are in fact consequence of adherence to the perennial philosophy of the Gita and the *dharma shastras* which continue to be extolled by the Hindu leaders and scholars.

Majumdar admits that "the general frame work of the Hindu society and religion in A.D. 1200 (the time when the *Gita* had fully established the supremacy of the Vedanta and the personal God all over India after acceptance of Shankara's thesis) did not undergo any radical change during the six hundred years that followed. The Hindus at the beginning of the nineteenth century exhibited the same fundamental characteristics as in the thirteenth." Then what caused the moral degradation? Was it Islam and the Muslim rule because there is no other known extraneous factor to have been present in the Indian society to which may be attributed the increasing debasement of Hindu society. Majumdar himself clarifies : "A deep rooted belief in the number of gods and goddesses, universal practice of image worship, a rigid caste system with its attendant restrictions about touch, food and marriage, child marriage and the strict prohibition of remarriage of widows, preference, among high caste Hindus, vegetarian diet, and horror of beef eating, indicate in no uncertain manner how Islam had failed to touch even the fringe of Hindu society. This was underlined especially by the untouchability and the old inequitous attitude towards the lower castes which afforded a striking contrast to the social equality of the people in Muslim community."[27] This clarification abundantly proves that no factor other than the Hindu religion as propounded in the Holy Poem and smritis was responsible for the general degradation of the Hindu society.

It is significant that not a single Hindu leader during this long period was inspired by the much bruited "lofty ideals" of the Gita to protest and fight against the barbarities and cruelties perpetrated on downtrodden and defenceless sections of Hindu society. On the contrary, both religious reformers and Brahmin philosophers in this long dark age accorded full

approval to the pernicious customs and connived at, if not blessed, the tyranny of the Muslim rule.

I venture, therefore,to suggest that the little potentiality for doing good which the Gita possessed in the shape of stabilising Indian society and temporarily establishing peace in India after the decline of Buddhism was exhausted within a period of two to three hundred years after the Guptas. When Shankara's anti-rationalist Mayavad succeeded in wiping out Buddhism and consolidating Hinduism, the deleterious aspect of the Gita doctrines unfolded itself and deterioration set in which culminated in the anarchy and callousness of the eighteenth century. Then the British conquered the entire Indian subcontinent and introduced a new intellectual and social revolution of which we shall now tell in the next chapter.

28

Old Wine in New Bottles

IN India and Greece there were, in ancient times, parallel developments in the domain of thought. Both the countries gave birth to eminent thinkers who speculated about the origin of universe and man's place in it; both built idealistic as well as materialistic theories to explain the phenomena of nature. The ignorance of primitive man induced him at the dawn of civilisation to imagine that there must be supernatural forces behind the natural phenomena. But some bolder and intellectually gifted men rejected such speculations and found the cause of the material universe in the inherent qualities of matter itself which led them to discover the theory of causalty, truths of physical science and the philosophy of rationalism. As in India so in Greece, the rationalist-materialist doctrines held sway for several centuries before the Christian era. While in India illustrious thinkers like Kapila, Kanada, Charvaka, Buddha and Mahavira, founders of well-known philosophical schools, were non-believers and mostly concerned with this world, in Greece the renowned men of philosophy like Thales (640-546 B.C.), Anaximander (611?-547? B.C.), Heraclitus (c.500 B.C.), Anaxagoras (c. 500 B.C.), Democritus (460-360 B.C.), Empidocles (c 500-430 B.C.), and Protagoras (c 500 B.C.) had advanced more or less materialistic theories about the origin of things.

Thales is known not only as father of philosophy but also as the founder of physical science. For him, philosophy and science are the two sides of the same coin. Philosophy must represent the knowledge of nature as it really exists which it can do only by complete reliance on the discoveries of science. When philosophy is separated from science, he said, it loses touch with reality and becomes barren.

The most advanced section of thoughtful men in both India and Greece, almost during the same period of history, boldly freed itself from the awe of natural phenomena which had terrified idealist thinkers into imagining countless gods. The materialist philosophers tore off the veil of mystery, set aside the mythical gods and sought the causes of the phenomena in nature itself. Thus was philosophy born in both the countries celebrated for ancient civilizations.

Some scholars hold that India was ahead of Greece in having passed over the primitive culture and acquired maturer thought and advanced knowledge. Mahavira was roughly a contemporary of Thales and Anaximander, the earliest of Greek philosophers. His teaching was a systematization of the thought of his predecessors who had rejected the existence of gods and the wizard-magic of the Vedic age; his analysis of the features of nature was therefore suitable, thorough-going and complex. Referring to the bold attemps of Indian thinkers and comparing them with the advance made by Greeks, Zimmer observes: "The world was already old, very wise and very learned, when the speculations of Greeks produced the texts that are studied in our universities as the first chapters of philosophy."[1]

In the earlier chapters we have discussed the rise and decline of the Indian philosophy. Interestingly enough, it approximately coincided with similar events of Greece. But there was a difference. While in India with the birth of neo-Brahminism, the forceful trends of materialist thought were effectively checked and the country spiritually emasculated, it was different with the Greek philosophy. In India, the idealistic Vedanta eclipsed and even overwhelmed every school of rational thought and assumed the dignity of Indian philosophy though it had lost all touch with reality. In Europe, the

period of spiritual darkness following upon the downfall of early materialistic schools, was brought to a close by the reassertion of rationalist theories on the strength of the achievements of modern science. Consequently, while the Western philosophy progressed by leaps and bounds the spiritual heritage of India still remains to be salvaged from her cultural debris.

This vital difference in the turn of events in the two countries is explained by M.N. Roy : "In ancient Greece, philosophy was created by the class of merchant princes whose social position was antagonistic to the power and privilege of the priesthood. In ancient India the trading class never attained such a position in society."[2] Therefore Indian philosophy remained undernourished and easily assailable by the priests. The Brahmin lawgivers, like the primeval Manu and others who followed him, saw to it that the merchants and trading classes did not acquire the strengh to challenge orthodoxy; science did not develop and come to the rescue of rational thought with the result that the opportunity for reassertion of philosophy did not arise and India failed to acquire real system of thought on the foundations laid down by her ancient thinkers as did Greece.

The Brahman of the Vedanta is an unverifiable hypothesis even according to the proponents of the system themselves; it is purely a priori assumption. The philosophy which claims to delve deep into the region of the unknown without the help of, and, indeed, by rejecting the scientific knowledge of the physical phenomena, cannot but be futile speculation. It is not even worthy of being considered a philosophy of life. For that reason, in the West, with the exception of a handful of scholars, no one is prepared to accord any dignity to, or accept the existence of, Indian philosophy. Even Heinrich Zimmer, the admiring exponent of Indian philosophies has to admit :

> Hegel's argument and it is still the argument of those who entertain the old reluctance to confer the title "philosopher" upon the immoral thinkers of India and China, is that something is missing from the oriental systems. When they are compared with Western philosophy, as

> developed in antiquity and in modern times; what is obviously lacking is the ever renewed, fructifying, close contact with the progressive natural sciences, their improving critical methods and their increasingly secular, non-theological, practically anti-religious outlook on man and the world. This is enough, we are asked to agree, to justify the Western restriction of its classic term. Here, it must be admitted, the Old Guard are quite correct."[3]

In India, with the rise of neo-Brahminist mythology, religion and philosophy were mixed up and amalgamated in a way that the former two dominated the latter and allowed no independence to it for growth. The weak and suppressed faces of revolution could not challenge this domination and consequently Indian philosophy lost its essential character and became an idle pastime.

If lately any reference to Indian philosophers is made in the Western histories of thought "as footnotes, side glances or preliminary chapters embellishing the story of real philosophy" it is to Kapila, Kanada, Buddha and Mahavira, and not to the propounders of the Vedanta.

The Vedic gods were neither dethroned nor dissolved for good in India. It is true that Charvakism, Samkhya, Jainism and Buddhism had done away with the supernatural deities but the triumphant neo-Brahminism restored them to their earlier positions. The gods were never disintegrated by criticism and natural science. In Greece, on the other hand, Anaxagoras, Democritus and other sophist thinkers made the Olympian deities look laughable and mocked at them "because of their all-too-human love affairs and excesses of wrath, which were regarded as incompatible with more spiritual and ethical later concept of divinity."[4] The family quarrels of the Olympian gods and the philanderings of Zeus (the *puranas* also frequently carry reports of such shameful activities of Hindu gods) offended the moral sense of the later Greeks. Says Zimmer: "Myth was no longer accepted as a valid interpretation of the processes of nature. The human features and biographies of the gods were rejected, even satirized; the archaic mythology and religion collapsed, the brilliant community of the Olympians fell...No such Twilight of the Gods occurred in the

sphere of the ancient Hindu thinkers."[5] India was therefore deprived of the progress made in the West; it plunged headlong into darkness after the decline of Buddhism.

The West also passed, as stated above, through a dark age after the decline of Greek philosophy and the rise of papist sacerdotalism. Idealists, supernaturalists and religious bigots ruled the mind of the European society for a few centuries. The neo-Brahmin philosophers can be compared at best with the Christian schoolmen of the European Dark Age, who kept philosophical speculation subservient to the revealed faith of Christianity and compelled it to enact the part of handmaid to theology and religion.

But with the progress of physical science in Europe the philosophy freed itself from these chains. "Without the development of modern mathematics, physics and astronomy, through the work of Galileo, Torricelli and their contemporaries, the new way of thought represented by Descartes and Spinoza would never have been found." Some of the pioneers paid with their lives for exposing theology, reviving rational thought and rejuvenating real philosophy. Giordano Bruno (1518-1600) had the courage to contradict Aristotle. He disputed the infallibility of the church and upheld the supremacy of reason and science. He was burned alive for his views but the dignity of faith was damaged. Descartes (1596-1650) expounded a mechanistic doctrine about the origin of the universe. His theory of vortices marks the birth of modern physics and cosmology. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) built philosophy on experimental science and enunciated the fundamental principles of a purely materialistic epistemology. Newton (1642-1727) explained the real philosophy as natural philosophy which was for all practical purposes nothing but materialism. In this way science and philosophy went hand in hand, one energising the other and ascending the ladder of progress step by step.

In Europe during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, science found philosophy clearing the way for its unique success when the positivistic empiricistic philosophies of Augustus Comte (b. 1798), J.S. Mill (1808-73) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) were conceived and fully developed. With

every discovery of science new tasks were assigned to philosophers to march forward. Meanwhile, India was revelling in its stagnation, holding fast to the beliefs as taught by the Gita, the Tantras and the Puranas that truth could be known only through idle speculation unrelated to reality. Pointing out that absolutely nothing of the kind done in the West would be found in the intellectual history of India, Zimmer laments :

> "Indian philosophy, on the contrary, has remained traditional, supported and refreshed not by outward directed experiment, but by the inward-turned experiences of Yoga-practice; it has interpreted rather than destroyed inherited belief, and in turn has been both interpreted and corrected by the forces of religion. Philosophy and religion differ in India on certain points, but there has never been a dissolving, over-all attack from the representatives of pure criticism against the immemorial stronghold of popular belief. In the end two, establishments have reinforced each other so that in each may be found characteristics which in Europe we should attribute only to its opposite. This is why the professors in our universities who far so long were reluctant to dignify Indian thinking about our everlasting human problems with the Greek and Western title "philosophy" were far from being unjustified."[6]

In Europe, the Renaissance Age was one of mounting self-confidence and optimism. The air of progress was exhilarating and those who breathed it in felt superior like the revolutionaries of all ages—paribrajakas of pre-Buddhist era in India, saracens in early days of Islam or communists during the period of Bolshevik uprising in Russia.

The discoveries of science which ended the Dark age in Europe led to industrialisation and unprecedented prosperity of the people. Some of the more progressive nations—among them Dutch, Portuguese, French and English—needed foreign markets for the sale of their products. Thus started the search overseas for colonies in the backward parts of the world which were immersed in primitive thoughts and lived on a low level of culture. Dominated by Brahminism with progressive forces totally suppressed, and involved in anarchy and chaos after the dissolution of the Mughal Empire, India was fit enough to become a colony.

By the end of the sixteenth century, Queen Elizabeth of England permitted the British merchants to form the East India Company with the purpose of exploring possibilities of trade in the East. After initial difficulties William Hawkins, the first Englishman deputed by the Company, reached India on August 24, 1608. He proved a failure but perseverance paid and, in 1632, the British merchants were successful in establishing a factory at Surat. Soon other factories were built in different parts of India notably Madras, Calcutta, Benaras and Agra.

The first aim of the Company was to defeat their rivals—Dutch, French and Portuguese—who were already doing business in India and earning huge profits by trade. It was no easy task. The employees of the Company realised before long that they needed an armed force to guard their establishments. The maintenance of soldiers led to skirmishes with native chiefs who were patronized by the rival European powers. We need not go into the details of these irregular battles but it is remarkable that from being a body of traders the East India Company to its own amazement, emerged as a sovereign power in the vast land five thousand miles away from its own home. "Nothing but a state of anarchy could explain the ease with which the English overran the country with ludicrously small armies."[7]

In the beginning the Company used mostly to employ, on petty salaries, inexperienced, semi educated lads or such men who were fond of adventure and interested in making fortunes. They had no scruples about the methods of amassing wealth. When the Company secured authority to collect revenue in Bengal and also a modicum of political power the low-bred and high-handed employees exploited the situation by fraud, chicanery, deception and forgery to fatten their purses. Lord Robert Clive (1725-1774) was 18 when he came to India as a "factor" in the civil service of the Company. Unscrupulous but intelligent and resourceful, he foiled the French in their attempts to gain ascendancy in India. In the battle of Plassey (1757) he won Bengal and laid the foundation of the British Indian Empire. After completing two terms as governor of Bengal, he returned home having become one of the richest Englishmen. He was accused of corruption on a big

scale which drove him to commit suicide. As Philip Woodruff observes : "Clive had let nothing turn him aside; he had not shrunk from intrigue and deception."[8]

After the battle of Plassey, Bengal fell at the feet of the East India Company. A period of unbridled profiteering followed. The Company officials who found themselves no longer merely merchants but the real rulers of Bengal engaged in local trade and business. By exercising intimidation and by giving false pledges never meant to be fulfilled, they enjoyed limitless opportunities to earn enormous wealth. According to a Parliamentary report, during the brief period of nine years (1757-1766) the fabulous sum of over £ 20,00,000 was received from the Bengalis as present by the employees of the Company and another high amount of £ 37,50,000 extracted as compensation for the losses incurred which were imaginary.

This was a scandalous state of affairs. Even Clive had to admit : "I will only say that such a scene of anarchy, confusion bribery, corruption and extortion was never seen or heard of in any country but Bengal ; no such and so many fortunes were acquired in so unjust and rapacious a manner." The report gave a jolt to public opinion in England. The British became aware of their responsibilities not as mere traders with the East but as the ruler of a state. To prevent the repetition of such abuses the Parliament passed the Regulating Act of 1773 which was followed by two similar Acts in 1784 and 1793. By these Acts the British India came under public control and was subjected to the parliamentary directives of clean administration and attention to the welfare of the people. The thoughtless policy in regard to the recruitment of Company's employees was changed. A feeling grew in England that "the Governor-General should be one who had not graduated in chicanery or grown grey in fraud and corruption." Instead of despatching inexperienced boys and fortune-seekers, henceforth intelligent, cultured and sympathetic men were deputed to handle the affairs of the newly-acquired empire.

In order to raise a cadre of well-trained, efficient, honest and hard-working civil servants, Lord Wellesely (1785-93) the builder of British Empire in India, opened a college at Fort William in Calcutta. This was short-lived but by having

established it the Governor-General forced the Court of Directors of the Company to open the East India College in 1806 at Hertford Castle which in 1809 was moved to Haielybury. It was accepted on all hands that 'the civil servant of the East India Company should have received the best, the most liberal, the most finished education that his country affords". Even the bitterest critic of British rule have admitted that the members of Indian Civil Service (ICS) did not fail to meet the expectations of the founders of the Haileybury Institute.

The outcome of the work done by the enlightened rulers in different social fields with the object of ending disorder, poverty and injustice will be discussed in the next chapter. Here we shall throw some light on the renaissance of the Indian people which followed their contact with the awakened British.

For many centuries in the medieval times, Britain was no better morally, socially and economically than India after the defeat of Buddhist Revolution. Under the Romans no doubt the people of the British Isles had benefited by the elevating thoughts of Geek culture. But like other parts of Europe Britain too had been drowned in the sea of Christian fanaticism. The Papist Inquisition had taken its toll. Then came Ranaissance which led to marvellous progress of science and wrought revolutionary changes in the thinking and the life of Europeans. The industrial revolution destroyed feudalism and with it the medieval outlook. Men as well as women were freed from the shackles of savage practices, inhuman rituals and demoralising observances fostered by Christian theology which had held them in thraldom for centuries. Religion was shown its proper place and the Church, denuded of all political authority, was separated from the State. Autocracy and despotism gradually yielded place to democratic order in all spheres of life.

Britain was foremost among the Western nations in the race for progress. It is therefore, not surprising that some of the men who were qualified and deputed to India as administrators and military commanders were not only fired with the ambition of building an empire to enable their compatriots to import precious commodities for home market and cheap raw material for the rapidly growing British industries, but were also carry-

ing sparks of the philosophical and social revolution which had given birth to a new and higher order of human society in Europe. The more zealous among the servants of the Company displayed impatience with the backward Indians they had to deal with; they instantly desired to confer the manifold blessings of a higher civilisation on them by annihilating the customs, traditions, ceremonies, rites and usages which were eating into the vitals of Indian society.

While laying the foundations of the new order the British rulers were more solicitous to uphold the principle of human dignity and social equality than to respect hoary customs and ancient laws of the Indians which were iniquitous. In the law courts the distinction between the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the Brahmin and the outcaste, the rajah and the ryot, man and woman which existed in the land from the days of the Vedas, and was confirmed by successive divine lawgivers, was abolished; the British Code knew no distinction between man and woman for in its eyes all persons were equal.

The schools started first by the Christian missioneries and later on by the Government, were open to children of all castes and communities. A Brahmin's son, if he wanted to benefit by Western education, had to rub shoulders with offsprings of the lower caste families and even untouchables.

The Government founded hospitals in big cities where the sick and the invalid received equal attention without consideration of the patient's social status and the caste or creed to which he belonged. Unless the attending doctor felt the need of doing so, no separate arrangement was made to examine women observing purdah because the British officials were loath to encourage the unwholesome practice.

When the railways were constructed all passengers, high or low, were treated alike; no concession was made to upper castes; the Brahmin had to sit in the contaminating proximity of the low caste people. In the course of long journeys between distant stations an orthodox high caste Hindu had either to starve himself or omit the performance of rituals necessary to have his victuals.

Closed Hindu society forbade sea-voyages and any one who travelled abroad a ship was declared an outcaste. By entering

an appropriate conditions in the terms of service at the time of recruitment, the Company encouraged thousands of Indian sepoys, among whom were Brahmin and kshatriyas, to undertake sea voyages. In fact, some Indian battalions served in the campaigns launched to subdue Burma where armies could be transported only be sea.

If the common people of India, abused, humiliated and dehumanised for over a thousand years, were dazzled by the rising new order under the alien British, there is nothing to be wondered at. That as foreigners who had usurped power the British were suspected there is little doubt; but their sense of social justice which the native rulers conspicuously lacked was endearing the new masters to the conquered. Having undergone the bitter experience of conversion by all means, including coercion and threat of murder, throughout the long period of Muslim rule the Hindus found it to their great joy that the new conquerors were little interested in proselytization. The policy of the British about religion was not to give offence. "It is not very much known that until 1831 Indian Christians were actively discriminated against by the British Government. They could not hold appointments in the Company's judicial service, nor were they permitted to practice as lawyers in the Company's courts. In contrast, the Government not only tolerated Hindu and Muslim festivals but allowed troops and military bands to participate in them."[9]

The Brahmin scholars had been incessantly talking about the greatness of their ancient philosophy and religion; they would hold up in support the Gita and its stress on righteousness, regard for truth, principle of equality, toleration for dissent, fair play, respect for women and sovereignty of reason, etc. But for many centuries to the acute agony of the masses these virtues were conspicuous by their absence in the Indian society whether under the Hindu or Muslim rule. Surprisingly the eternal values of compassion, fellow-feeling, mercy, social justice and equality were now being established in the holy land of the Aryans by a *malechha* (non-Hindu foreign) government. However, what the British taught and practised was not entirely new to the conquered people; it was similar to what

had obtained in Indian society for a thousand years of the Buddhist Revolution.

The British were not godless people, but, in line with the teachings of the Buddha, they left God alone and based their philosophy of life and politics on secular theories. They acknowledged the supremacy of reason; their outlook was worldly and their decisions were guided neither by caste prejudices nor religious bigotry as had been those of their Hindu and Muslim predecessors. This was a fundamental difference between the two orders.

Some of the thoughtful Indians had not entirely forgotten the theories of their ancient rationalist-materialist thinkers, therefore they did not fail to perceive a likeness between the doctrines of the ancient seers and the latest foreign conquerors. For them what the British brought from Europe was old wine in new bottles. Led by such descerning elements the Indian people soon became admirers of the British rule. "What ever might have been the first reaction of the Hindu against the British", says Majumdar, "there is no doubt that they not only reconciled themselves to it, but became friendly and even devoted to the new leaders."[10]

Bengal was the first province of India which had come under British rule, and, therefore, the fruits of Western civilisation and culture were also tasted by the Bengalis before the people of any other part of the subcontinent had occasion to do so.

The spread of new ideas caused a ferment and mental churning. The writings of thinkers like John Stuart Mill, Jeremey Bentham and Thomas Paine flushed the youth with an yearning for intellectual and spiritual freedom. There was a revolt against Hinduism and its hoary institutions were challenged. A renaissance was at hand in India.

The first Bengali thinker to be influenced by the winds of change was Rammohan Roy (1774-1833) acclaimed as the father of Indian Nationalism. Critical and cautious but progressive, Roy foresaw the benefits that India could derive from British rule. In his autobiographical sketch he admits that in 1790 at that age of sixteen he entertained "a feeling of great aversion to the establishment of British power in India"

but "when I had reached the age of twenty...I first saw and began to associate with Europeans and soon after made myself tolerably acquainted with their law and form of Government. Finding them generally more intelligent, more steady and moderate of their conduct, I gave up my prejudice against them and became inclined in their favour feeling persuaded that their rule, though a foreign yoke, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of the native inhabitants."[11]

Roy was a scholar of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit. He had also learnt Greek and Latin. While yet a boy he was emotionally stirred when his brother's widow was cruelly burned on the pyre of her dead husband against her will. He was driven to fight the evils of Hinduism and to valiantly tread on the path of revolt against the orthodoxy of Brahminism. His forthright criticism and bold expressions raised such feelings against him that "I was atleast deserted by every person except two or three Scotch friends to whom and to the nation to which they belong I will always be grateful."

Roy protested against the idolatries and superstitions of all creeds and tried to lay the foundations of a universal religion with the doctrine of the unity of Godhead. He drew inspiration from the Upanishads. His habits and tastes were those of a Muslim though he adhered to Hindu faith until the last day of his life. He believed that the doctrine of One God taught by the Upanishads would raise the Indians from the mire into which they had sunk. In 1825 he established the Vedanta College for teaching monotheistic doctrines "as a means for leading his countrymen into pure and elevated theism." But not satisfied with it, he founded the Brahmo Samaj or the "One God Society" in August 1828. It was a meeting ground of all sects for the worship of the True Divinity and for fight against degrading superstitions, idolatrous practices, and other abuses as had accumulated round Hinduism during the past centuries.

To spread his unorthodox, liberal views Roy first edited a Bengali weekly and later, to reach a wider public, he started another journal in Persian which was still the language of the intellectuals.

Rammohan's greatness rests not so much on the reforms he introduced in the Hindu religion, which after all were not very radical or fundamental, as on his admiring attitude towards the Western culture and his zeal to persuade his countrymen, to adopt it. He was a champion of English education and a devoted worker for the cause of women's emancipation. In a letter to Lord Amherst, the Governor-General (1823-28), he strongly protested in December 1823 against the Government proposal to establish a Sanskrit school in Calcutta under pandits. He pointed out that such a school "can only be expected to lead the minds of the youth with grammatical niceties and metaphysical distinctions of little or no practical use to the possessors or, to the society." He beckoned the Governor-General that such schools were discarded in England long ago. What was needed in India was "to promote a more liberal, and enlightened system of instruction embracing, Mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy, with other useful sciences, which may be accomplished with the sums proposed by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning, educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments and other apparatus."[12]

Roy's views ultimately prevailed and English as medium of instruction for modern education was introduced in India under the rule.

Rammohan Roy's uninhibited views on education, culture and politics amazed even Western scholars. He had long talks with an intelligent French scientist, Victor Jacquemont, who travelled over India and maintained a diary which was published in Paris in 1814. Jacquemont records :

> "Rammohan Roy has surprised me by the accuracy and the range of his knowledge of the various states of Europe. Formerly when he was a young man, he himself told me, this Europe, the mistress of his native land, was odious to him ; in the blind partriotism of youth he detested the English and all that came from them. Since that time he had learned more about the benefits which have followed upon the establishment of the British Power and he came to regard it as beneficial to India."

Some of the contemporary Hindu leaders may concede this

much. But what will scandalize the present-day Hindu nationalists is Roy's definition of independence which a rationalist drunk deep in ancient Indian thought could alone give. Jacquemont quoting Roy says :

> "National Independence is not an absolute good ; the object, the goal so to say, of society is to secure the happiness, of the greatest possible number, and when left to itself, a nation cannot attain this object when it does not contain within itself the principles of future progress ; it is better for it that it should be guided by the example and even by the authority of a conquering people who are more civilised."[13]

> Making himself clearer to the interviewer, Roy added : When we have to depend by the very conditions of our existence on all things and all beings in nature, is not this fiery love of national independence a chimera ? In society individuals are constantly driven by their weakness to seek help from their neighbours, especially if the neighbours happen to be stronger than they ; why, then, should a nation have the absurd pride of not depending upon another ? Conquest is very rarely an evil when the conquering people are more civilised than the conquered, because the former bring to the latter the benefits of civilisation. India requires many more years of domination so that she may not have many things to lose while she is reclaiming, her political independence."[14]

No Nationalist biographer of Rammohan Roy has referred to these blunt but extremely meaningful remarks of the Father of Indian Nationalism. Mahatma Gandhi called him a pigmy.

Roy whole-heartedly supported the British rulers in their crusade against the social evils and the servitude of women. He was instrumental in getting concremation of widows banned by legislation. The Brahmo Samaj laid stress on the abandonment of caste, encouragement of widow remarriage, female education and abolition of *purdah*. "Rammohan assailed, "says Majumdar, "the strongest part of the citadel of Hindu religion and society. He opposed the worship of images of gods and goddesses, denounced *sati*, polygamy, and abuses of the caste system, favoured remarriage of Hindu widows, and set at naught the prohibition of crossing the seas by his voyage to England."[15]

Rommohan was deputed by the pensionary Mughal Emperor as his ambassador to Britain where he died on September 19, 1833. His tomb at Arvo Vale cemetry in Bristol is visited by many on the anniversary day as a place of pilgrimage.

After Roy's death stalwarts like Dwarka Nath Tagore, his son, Devendra Nath Tagore, and Keshab Chandra Sen led the Brahmo movement. Keshab was hailed as deliverer of the people and at his request a new lagislation called the Native Marriages Act popularly known as Civil Marriages Act, was passed in 1872. It was applicable to anyone who declared: "I am not a Hindu, not a Musalman, not a Christian." The Bill was originally called the Brahmo Marriage Bill because it was necessitated by the marriages of Brahmos which were not valid in the eyes of the Hindu law because the image of *saligram* (Hindu idol) was not present during the ceremony and caste rules were not observed.

There were only six members of the Brahmo Samaj in 1829, 100 in 1839, 500 in 1849 and 2000 in 1864. Later it became a powerful movement and spread all over Bengal.

Outside Bengal, too, a spirit of revolt against Hinduism was rising. Many associations and groups were formed to spread iconoclastic ideas and anti-religious views by men who learnt about Western egalitarian culture and freedom of thought. But for decades these bodies lacked courage to come out in the open and were holding meetings secretly. The participants were afraid of ex-communication by orthodox leaders who continued to hold sway in the society. "Among the Hindu of the time the Brahmins were all in all", records Upendra Nath Mukhopadhya in his *Life of Raja Rammohan Roy*. "In fact, Hindu society regarded and worshipped the Brahmans as very gods. People believed that their path to heaven would be free if they could appease the Brahmans. One regarded with disfavour by the Brahmans was ostracized and had to lead a life of abject misery."

In 1840 Ram Balkishna Jaykar, Dadoba Pandurang and others started Paramhamsa Mandali. It was a semi-secret society with branches in Poona, Ahmedabad, Nagar Satara Belgaum and Ratnagiri. It had the object of educating people,

inculcating liberal and rational views and fighting superstition and social evils accepted in the name of Hindu religion. The Mandali had become an eyesore to the Brahmins. For 20 years it did yeoman service. Then a Brahmin spy enrolled himself as a member of the Mandali, got hold of the lists of all member and published them with the statement that they were atheists, inter-dinners and haters of religous rituals, advocated *varnasankara* cult (castelessness) or were on way to embrace Christianity. Many unfounded accusations too were brought against the members. It struck a blow at the Mandali and other secret or semi-secret societies began to languish. But soon bolder people came forward who openly defied othodoxy. In Bombay the Prarthana Samaj (Prayer Society), with similar aims as those of Brahmo Samaj, was founded in 1867. Its leader was Atmaram Pandurang (1823-1898). Its followers stood against idolatry and worshipped the Supreme Being without any shape or form. In the beginning they were called *Ekeshwaris* (believers in One God) before the name Prarthana Samaj was introduced. Since they insisted on faith in prayers the new name became current. The Samaj advocated abolition of caste and child marriage, education of women and equal status for them, interdinning, intermarriage and widow remarriage. They taught the values of Western culture and democratic ideals. Very prominent and highly placed citizens like justice M.C. Ranade, Proof. R.G. Bhandarkar, Sir Chandavarkar Shamrao Vithal, Shantaram Bondse and others were among those who joined the Prarthana Samaj.

Though on the right path, neither Brahmo Samaj nor Prarthana Samaj had the courage to go the whole hog with the Renaissance. The Hindu leaders were reformers but not revolutionaries; they hesitated to strike at the roots of established Brahminical social order and usually thought they could go to a limit and no further. But young Bengal rushed ahead under the leadership of Louis Vivan Derozio (1809-1831). At the age of sixteen this intellectual giant joined the Hindu College as a lecturer and moulded the lives of a number of brilliant students who played effective role in awakening Bengal. Derozio and his band of disciples were completely imbued with the spirit of Renaissance. The youthful Professor used to impress

upon the students with whom he came in contact "the sacred duty of thinking for themselves", "to live and die for truth", and "to cultivate the virtues, shunning vice in every shape." He often read examples from ancient histories "of love of justice, patriotism, philanthropy and self-negation." He was against the debasing traditions, irrational rituals and superstitions which plagued India and admired courage to speak and act against them.

In 1828, Derozio founded an academic association for discussion of advanced social and political ideas. The subjects considered included "free will, free ordination, fate, faith, the sacredness of truth, the high duty of cultivating virtue, the meanness of vice, the nobility of patriotism, and arguments for and against the existence of God." Derozio's followers were a mixed band including among them, atheists, agnostics and inconoclasts; they freely idulged in things prohibited by Hindu religion merely to assert their freedom of conscience and dignity of individuality.

While the purpose of Brahmo Samajists was to reform Hinduism, Derozians rejected religion altogether. For them reason was the supreme authority in all matters concerning life and happiness of all people as the only goal of human existence. They ridiculed Brahmin dogmas and rites and even contemptuously referred to the monotheistic doctrine of the Vedanta. For this affront Derozio's service were abruptly terminated by the authorities of the Hindu College. Even the founders of the Brahmo Samaj could not tolerate him.

Derozio died in 1831 at the very young age of twenty-two from an attack of cholera. But the trail he had blazed was trodden by bold Bengali youth for decades after he was no more to guide them. They came increasingly under the influence of John Francis Bacon (1561-1526), Adam Smith (1723-1760), Tom Paine (1737-1809) and J.S.Mill (who were the new proponents of the ancient rationalist philosophy. Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*, priced at rupee one, was sold at rupees five a copy among these enthusiasts.

Derozio's achievements, considering that he passed away so young, were amazing. He had less than five years to evolve his philosophy and build the group which later boasted of

being "the aristocracy of intelligence". While Rammohan Roy stopped at Voltair's deism, Derozio advanced to Hume's agnosticism. Four years after Derozio's death the *Englishman* of Calcutta felt worried that Bengali students inspired by his teachings were all Benthamites and belonged to the school of Adam Smith. Both Roy and Derozio believed in the ending of foreign rule but their nationalism was different from the latter day religious nationalism which generated hatred of the British. Both admired the British culture and rejected Indian models as being despotic and too closely identified with religion.

Derozians were active even in the fifties of the last century and the tradition of free thought set by them continue in one way or another in Bengal up to this day.

In the second part of the nineteenth century a network of schools and colleges spread all over India and Western education was imparted to thousands of young men and women. It also encouraged the spirit of revolt against orthodoxy and gave a fillip to the renaissance movement. The work started by Roy and Derozio in Bengal was taken up by scores of educated youth in different parts of the country; the intellectual climate was undergoing a rapid change.

Among the staunch freedom fighters mention may be made of Balshastri Jambhekar who conducted the weekly *Darpan* in the thirties of the last century and fearlessly denounced social evils supported by Brahmins. His good work was continued after him by Gopal Hari Desmukh popularly know as "Lokhitwadı." But the two indefatigable and dauntless missionaries of Indian Renaissance were Mahatma Jotiba Phule (1827-1890) and Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922). With the assistance of his wife, Phule started a girls school in Poona in 1851. He was opposed to Brahminism and wanted to eradicate it; his campaign for the removal of untouchability, emancipation of women and economic regeneration of the depressed classes brought him into clash with the upper castes. He was persecuted even by his father. Undettered, he continued to challenge the domination of the Brahmins and sought to instil courage, enthusiasm and self-reliance in the people. He founded in 1873

the *Satya-Shodak Samaj* with the object of extirpating Brahminism.[16]

Pandita Ramabai was a great scholar. She revolted against the Hindu society and married out of her caste but lost the husband. Untiring and energetic she devoted her life to the service of oppressed women. "Her denunciation of men for keeping women down, her marriage out caste and her criticism of Hinduism aroused the orthodox sections against her though they admitted her scholarship and eloquence." Disgusted with the obscurantism of Hindu society and to spite the Brahmins she embraced Christianity and started a widows home, Sharda Sadan, where no fewer than 2000 helpless inmates were protected and trained to stand on their own feet. B.G. Tilak denounced her for anti-Hindu views and philanthropic work suspecting that she was engaged in proselytisation.

We need not refer to the work of scores of other reformers and revolutionaries who, inspired by new learning, fought against degrading superstitions and irrational doctrines of Hinduism. But it must be noted that British rule and Western ideas had created a stir all over India and the cities were pulsating with non-conformist ideas.

In bringing about the mental change a significant part was played by the Indians who distinguished themselves by inculcating the spirit of Science. The first among them was Professor Ramachandra who was born in 1821 at Panipat. He was a born mathematician and was appointed at the early age of 23 in the Oriental Department of the Delhi College as teacher of European Sciences. He translated or compiled works in Urdu on algebra, trigonometry and differential calculus so that Indian students might profit by New Learning. His efforts, unfortunately, gave rise to a conflict. "We commenced", says Ramchandra, "a monthly magazine at the cheap rate of four pence a month in which notices of English Science were given. Not only were the dogmas of ancient philosophy exposed, but many of the Hindu superstitions were openly attacked. The result of this was that many of our countrymen condemned us as infidels and irreligious."[17] Ramchandra was persecuted and driven to embrace Christianity in 1852.

In 1850, Ramchandra published his mathematical work on the problems of *Maxima and Minima.* It brought him to the notice of the Court of Directors of the East India Company. The book was presented to Augustus De Morgan, the most famous English mathematician of his time. He found in the book "a merit worthy of encouragement which was likely to promote native effort towards the restoration of the native mind in Indian."[18] The Court of Directors granted a *khillat* (dress of honour) and Rs. 2000 to Professor Ramachandra. Thus encouraged he wrote in 1861 another book on *A New Method of Differential Calculus* which was considered an original contribution to the subject.

Another man of Science was Dr. Mahendralal Sircar. Born on November 2, 1833, in a peasant family at Paikpara near Howrah, he received his early education in David Hare's School. In his studies he was fascinated by Science and decided to devote his life to its promotion not only for self-development but for the regeneration of the Hindu community. At an early age he felt convinced that "the study of Science was the only method to get at the fundamental laws that govern the universe."[19] He felt that "scientific education was a great desideratum in his country" and that "the only method by which the Hindu mind could be developed to its full proportion was by the cultivation of the physical sciences."[20]

In 1868, Dr. Sircar started the *Calcutta Journal of Medicine*. Laying the foundation of the Vizianagaram Laboratory, Dr. Mahendralal observed that the Hindu religion "had become through the corruption of successive age, a heterogeneous medley of theology, philosophy, science and what not, in other words, a chaotic mass of crude and undigested and unfounded opinions on all subjects enumerated and enforced in the most dogmatic way imaginable."[21] What was the way to set it right? Dr. Sircar replied: "I am impressed more than ever with the necessity of science cultivation by my countrymen and not simply for their improvement but, as I have been saying from the very beginning, for their very regeneration; or I would not have sacrificed a life in endeavouring to awaken them to that necessity."[22]

Dr. Sircar comparing India with Japan, used to pose a question : "One Asiatic nation who were immeasurably our inferiors in ages past when we were in the days of our glory having understood the spirit of the age, have accordingly acted and have thereby acquired coordinate position with the foremost nations of the world and are now treated by them as honoured allies. Why cannot India emulate her example?"[23] Lobouring indefatigably and with devotion for six years, Dr. Mahendralal was able to see on January 15, 1876, the Science Association inaugurated in Calcutta. Gradually, it developed into a great centre of scientific research from which "a new stream of knowledge flowed to every part of the world." Dr. Sircar became the high priest of the Temple of Science. As stated by his admiring colleague Rev. Father Lafont, Dr. Sircar dreamed that through New Learning "the Hindus might, in course of time, add their own discoveries to those of their fellow brethren in the west."[24]

In the closing years of his life, Dr. Sircar's selfless services to the cause of Indian Renaissance were recognised; the British became his ardent admirers. Lord Curzon conferred on him the honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws. He was appointed honorary presidency magistrate and later on made a CIE. He was also nominated as a member of the Bengal Council. The Council of the Asiatic Society of Bengal was proud of him as one of its prominent members. He passed away in 1903.

Sircar's dreams did not remain unrealized for very long, on 6 November 30, 1858, was born Jagadish Chandra Bose in Bikrampore near Dacca. Son of a well-to-do father, he graduated from St. Xavier College and proceeded to London for further study. Here be recieved inspiration from the leading lights in the world of Science. After securing B.A. from the London University in 1885, he returned to India and was appointed as Professor of Physics in the Calcutta Presidency College. Soon he started making researches in the small college laboratory founded by himself. His essay on "Determination of the Indices of Electric Refraction" proved a turning point in his life because it was recognised by known authorities as of high

scientific value. The University of London conferred the Degree of the Doctor of Science on him.

But this was only the beginning. J.C. Bose was to discover the possibility of transmitting electric telegraph signals through space without the use of wires. As far back as 1895 at an experimental demonstration in the presence of British Governor he showed how this could be done. His next momentous discovery was the result of his experiments on plant and animal response to stimuli. In 1901 he demonstrated fully and elaboratety the identical nature of reactions in plants and animals. The discovery of Bose proved that "there is no sharp dividing line between the nervous life of plants and animals and in one respect, it seems, that the life of the plant Mimsa exactly reproduces the life history of human nations."[25] The success of the new research was largely due to the invention of an apparatus of extreme sensibility which Bose invented and called Resonant Recorder. A few years later he discovered another equally delicate instrument called the Crescograph to study plant life that gives visual demonstration of movement far beyond the highest powers of a microscope.

In 1906, Bose published his monumental work *Plant Response* and a few years later appeared *The Motor Mechanism of the Plants* in which he recorded his discoveries one by one.

By now the talent of J.C. Bose as an original thinker and a great scientist was established.

The famous periodical *Lancet* acknowledged that his discoveries must be regarded "as of fundamental importance to the elucidation of various phenomena relating to the irritability of living tissues."[26] Prof Molisch, Director of the Pflargen Physiologishches of the Imperial University of Vienna, confessed that "Europe was indebted to India for the method of investigation initiated by Dr. Bose," and the *Fortnightly Review* remarked "In Bose is seen an invincible, perhaps immortal, quality which has given a permanence to the Indian civilization such as no other nation has approached."[27] The Rector of the Vienna University could not resist the urge of writing to the British Viceroy that "Bose's researches have opened a new gate of knowledge of the highest theoretical and practical importance."[28]

In 1900, Lord Curzon deputed Jagadish Chandra to represent India at the Paris Congress of Sciences where he acquitted himself creditably well. He went to America and learned bodies such as the New York Academy of Sciences, the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, the Harvard, and Columbia and Chicago Universities listened with delight to him and presented him with welcome addresses.

Bose had astonished the world with three of his discoveries: First, the property of invisible electric waves, second, indivisible activities of plant and animal life and, third, the unique generalizations of the unity of life. These were the achievements for which encomiums were showered on him wherever he went.

As a mark of high distinction Bose was made Emeritus Professor on full pay of Calcutta University after retirement in 1915. A knighthood was awarded to him in 1916.

Anxious to spread scientific education and train intelligent youngmen in research Sir J.C. Bose founded, on November, 30, 1917, Bose Research Institute at Calcutta which is rendering inestimable services to the cause and is a lasting memorial to his greatness.

It was the fervent desire of Bose that India may become a progressive nation by forgetting her dark past and by thinking how to build a bright future through science. He drew a bold line between India's dark age and bright rationalist past. "In travelling all over the world which I have done several times", he stated, "I was struck by two characteristics of different nations. One characteristic of certain nations is living for the future. All the modern nations are striving to win force and power from Nature. There is another class of men who live in the glory of the past. Now what is to be the future of our nation? Are we to live only in the glory of the past and die off from the face of the earth, or to show that we are worthy descendants of the glorious past and to show by our work, by our intellect and by our service that we are not a decadent nation. We have still the great and mighty future before us, a future that will justify our ancestry."[29]

If at all Bose turned towards the past for inspiration it was to Buddhist learning and culture. "I have been to the ruins of

the universities of Taxila in the farthest corner of India, which attract the people of the West and the East. I have been to the ruins of Nalanda which invited all the West to gain knowledge under this intellectual fostering."[30] He never referred to the *maths* of Shankaracharaya or any other Brahmin savant. "The present era is the era of temples of learning," he asserted. "We want to erect temples and viharas, which are so indispensable to the study of Nature and her secrets."[31]

So far as knowledge was concerned, Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose knew no distinction between the West and the East. By awakening the spirit for acquiring knowledge and whetting hunger for research of his countrymen he desired to make up for what they had lost during the dark ages of Indian history and bring them abreast of advanced nations. "My object is to bring the sciences of the East and the West into closer affinity for the benefit of the humanity."[32]

By his hard work and brilliant researches and discoveries of Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose shed lustre on his country. He was called *Yuga Pravartaka* (Epoch Maker). He raised India in the estimation of the world and showed that once again this land had something to teach to the world as of yore. He died on November 23, 1937.

At the same time when Bose was making remarkable discovries in the fields of physics and physiology another scientist earned fame in the domain of chemistry. Born in 1861 at Raruli Katipara in Khulna district, Profullachandra Ray had his early education in various institutions in Calcutta. In 1882 he went to England as Gilchrist scholar and was at Edinburgh for six years from where he took his BSc degree in 1885 and MSc degree in 1887.

After return to India he joined the Presidency College in Calcutta as professor of chemistry.

In 1895, Ray made the discovery of *mercurous-citrate* which at once made him talked about man in the scientific world. Sir Alexander Pedler, the renowned scientist, declared : "Dr. P.C. Ray by his discovery of the method of preparation of this compound, has filled up a blank in our knowledge of the mercury series."[33] Another most important discovery which followed after an interval was the preparation and volatiliza-

tion of *ammonium-nitrate*. Impressed by his talent and deep interest in science, he was deputed by the Government of India in 1904 to visit the important chemical laboratories in Europe.

Gaining experience and knowledge by wide travels, P.C. Ray started a factory, the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works, in 1905 with the meagre capital of Rs. 800. With it were laid the foundations of the Indian Pharmaceutical Industry which is today producing drugs worth Rs. 30 crores annually.

Ray wrote profusely and contributed scores of articles to different journals throwing a flood of light on the chemicals constituents of many of the more important compounds of nitrates. Among scientists he came to be called "Master of Nitrates" which was a recognition of his profound knowledge of chemistry.[34]

His studies covered both the Western and Eastern systems. In 1902, he published first volume of the *History of Hindu Chemistry* in which he took pains to show by reference to old Sanskrit texts the antiquity of the knowledge of chemistry in India. The second volume of the book appeard five years later.

But Ray's greatest achievement was the school of chemistry of his own and the laboratory which he established to train youngmen, Prof. Sylvain Levi who had occasion to see the work done here remarked : "Prof Ray's laboratory is the nursery from which issue forth the chemist of New India."[35]

For the excellent work that Ray did the Durham University conferred on him the honorary degree of DSc in 1912. The British government awarded him the high honour of knighthood.

From his early boyhood Ray was attracted by the doctrines of Brahmo Samaj. He joined it in 1882 and continued to be its member till the last day of his life. He was opposed to caste system and had no words strong enough to denounce it. Presiding over the Indian National Social Conference in 1917 he observed that when Hindus are affronted with caste "reason, logic and common sense are scattered to the winds."

Ray was fully conscious of the dismal period through which India had passed and the demoralization that had set in. Hinduism has now degenerated into a hundred, nay petrified conglomerate of unmeaning and often obnoxious social customs," he lamented. He stood for enlightenment through reason whose sovereignty was indisputable. Presiding over the Indian Science Congress in February 1920 he adjured the youth of the country to cultivate the scientific habit of thought-not to take anything on trust but to pursue truth with the light of reason and pursue it diligently and persistently. He said :

> "While the study of science is essential to our material advancement it has a special need and significance for the culture of Indian youth. A long period of intellectual stagnation has produced in us a habit of dependence on the authority of the *Shastras* (scriptures). Reason was bound to the wheel of faith and all reasoning proceeded on assumption and premises which it was not open to anybody to call in question or criticise. Intellectual progress was handicapped under these conditions and it is no wonder that India cannot point out any notable achievement in this line during the 1000 years that preceded the advent of British rule. Reason has thus to be set free from the shackles and the function of science in achieving this end is indisputable. Science takes nothing on trust but applies to them all the methods of investigation and criticism. I look forward to the growth of this scientific spirit in our country to liberalise our intellect."[36]

Dr. Ray will rank in history as one of the greatest of those who have helped in building up the edifice of modern India. Like Prof Ramchandra, Dr. Mahendra lal Sircar and Sir J.C. Bose he was a man of Indian Renaissance. His biographer, correctly assessing his personality, remarks :[37]

> "Absolutely Oriental in habits and tastes, there are very few men in Bengal who have drunk so deep of Western knowledge and who have been so strong and steadfast champions of right thinking and right doing. A devoted and careful student of Mill and Spencer, Dr. Ray is a rationalist to the very core of his heart."[38]

Equally great and illustrious, if not surpassing them all, as harbinger of Enlightenment, is Raman. In his achievements, Dr. Mahendralal Sircar would certainly have found the fruition of his desire of India once again making original contributions to scientific knowledge.

Chandrashekhar Venkanta Raman was born on June 3, 1888, of humble parents at Trichinopoly in south India. His aptitude for mathematics and science were noted by his teachers early in his life. He not only obtained a first class in M.A. from the Madras University but also stood first which was a unique distinction until then in the history of the university. He was only 18 years old but the British Government unhesitatingly recognised his merit by appointing him as Deputy Accountant General in its Finance Department. He was posted in Calcutta which proved very fortunate as here he made the acquaintance of the leading lights of the Association for the Cultivation of Science, including Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee.

It did not take long for Sir Ashutosh, a fair judge of men, to size up Raman and offer him in 1914 the chair of physics in the Calcutta University. For a youngman of little over 25, it was an unparalleled honour; Raman rose to the occasion and did not belie the expectations of the great savant.

Besides teaching and training the students at the University, Raman got completely absorbed in research at the laboratory, a work after his own heart. He made varied experiments and wrote a number of papers. In 1925, he proceeded on a world-wide tour for ten months when he met brilliant minds of the scientific world and different types of people and civilizations. At the invitation of the Russian Academy of Science he toured parts of USSR and came to know of scientific progress under the communists.

Now came the period of creativity in the life of Raman and his mind flowered. In 1926, he made an interesting discovery regarding the construction of soap bubbles. But by far the most important contribution he made to the knowledge of science was what is now commonly known as Raman-effect. In nutshell it is thus explained : "When light falls upon molecules of matter and is scattered by them, a remarkable change occurs which is most readily perceived by observing the scattered

light through a prismatic spectroscope."[39] The discovery opened a new field of research for the investigation the constitution of molecules, of matter generally and off its optical properties. When the authenticity of the discovery was confirmed in the West it was hailed "as a surprising and brilliant discovery with immense potentialities." In his report, Professor Pringheim of the Berlin University stated : "Upon one point no doubt can exist, that through his discovery, Raman has opened up a great and completely new region in spectroscopy."[40]

Raman's other discoveries in the realm of science and mathematics were eclipsed by the universal acceptance of the potentialities of his theory about light; it raised him as a shining star in the firmament of science. Innumerable honours were conferred on him at home and abroad. On June 3, 1929 (the King's birthday) he was granted a knighthood. A year later he secured the most coveted Nobel Prize.

Raman wrote a number of books notably *Molecular Diffraction of Light*. *Physics of Crystals* and *Theory of Musical Instruments*. In 1943 he founded the Raman Research Institute at Bangalore.

In the domain of social philosophy C.V. Raman is an uncompromising rationalist and unsparing critic of Brahmin obscurantism. A staunch supporter of New Learning and Science he never misses a chance of denouncing religious dogmatism, superstitions and irrational beliefs. In the course of his convocation address at Benaras, the citadel of Brahminism, he remarked in 1926:

> "We live today not in an age of the Vedas and the Upanishads; we live in a modern age; we live in an age of research; a period of intense striving to create new realms of thought, to penetrate the mystery of nature by the use of all intellectual and material forces under human command. During the last one hundred years, vast fields of new knowledge have been discussed and cultivated and everything points to an increasingly vigorous advance into regions as yet unknown. We in India, as a people, cannot afford merely to stand aside and be merely passive spectators of this remarkable outburst of human activity. To stand aside would be to confess ourselves an

> effete and worn-out people fit only to be laid on the shelf and suffer economic and political extinction."[41]

The discoveries and the rational thoughts of outstanding scientists coupled with the heretic beliefs and anti-religious teaching of the revolutionary philosophers generated an atmosphere conducive to fermentation of ideas.

A new era of doubting and thinking had begun. "The principal reason for this is", says R.C. Majumdar, "that India came into contact with Western ideas at a most opportune moment. It was the age of French illumination when the spirit of rationalism and individualism dominated European thought. It proclaimed supremacy of reason over faith, of individual conscience over outside authority, and brought in its train new conception of social justice and political rights."[42] The new thinking was inimical to Brahminism and hostile to the holy Hindu scriptures including the Gita.

One reason for the fermentation of thought was the discovery that Western culture contained the positive values evolved by a number of ancient Indian sages in their philosophies which Brahmins had either suppressed or distorted. What the British taught was an echo of the sublime principles preached by the Indian seers like Kanada, Kapila, Charvak, Mahavira and Buddha in bygone ages. Now the time had come, it was dimly realised, when the ancient truths, must once again be raised on high pedestal. Majumdar adds : "To put it in a concrete form, the most important result of the impact of Western culture on India was replacement of blind faith in current traditions, beliefs and conventions—characteristic of mediaeval age—by a spirit of rationalism which seeks to inquire and argue before accepting anything."[43]

It seemed India was ready for a second revolution which would be bigger in magnitude than the Revolution of the Buddhist period.

29

The Golden Epoch

THE British came to India as traders, but the prevalent chaos encouraged and induced them to build an empire in the sub-continent. Having brought extensive parts of the country under their rule, they were confronted with not only the pressing problem of political and administrative instability but many other issues involving the social and economic life of the multitudes over whom they had to exercise their authority. No doubt, trade and commerce continued to be the main preoccupation of the East India Company's officials, but no less important in their eyes were the defence of the territories and the establishment of law and order for bettering the prospects of trade and commerce. Yet, the administrators could not for long ignore the crying social and economic needs of the ruled demanding their attention.

The responsible officials considered it a part of their duty to effect improvements in the condition of the governed, without in any way harming the interests of the Company. Indeed, they felt that in building an empire in India they were not only instrumental in enriching their homeland by securing cheap raw materials for British Industries from the conquered territories but they had also a mission to fulfil : to modernize the subject nation, to lift its masses from the depths of morass into which they had sunk due to low culture, outmoded political organisation, harsh rule, and antiquated economic system no less than

through colossal ignorance and soul-killing superstitions.

India of the eighteenth century was almost solely an agricultural country depending for its life on the produce of land. The plight of peasantry which formed 90 per cent of the population, therefore, engaged the attention of the new rulers even before they were free from the concern about internal order and invasion from outside. The problem was twofold : to settle the disputes about the porprietorship of agricultural land and fix the share of the produce which the Government could take as revenue for running the administration. The British administrators saw that the Government should not appropriate more than was necessary to provide a solvent treasury and leave the rest in the peasant's hands enough to keep him on the land to work and reasonably content. Fortunately, the East India Company found very able, sincere and indefatigable men to accomplish the tough task by patient application to the intricacies of the problem. Names of men like Sir John Shore (1751-1834), Thomas Munro (1761-1827) Sir John Malcolm (1769-1833), Mountstuart Elphinston (1778-1859), Henry Vansittart, Jonathan Duncan and James Thomason (1804-1878) should be gratefully remembered for the invaluable services they rendered in different parts of India to solve the complicated land problem. Because he frequently brought complaints of the poor people to the notice of the Government Thomason was nicknamed Thomason the grievance monger by the Anglo-Indian Press.

Before the coming of the British, the peasant had no occupancy right or at any rate none by which he could dispose of the land he was tilling. The Mughals were the proprietors of all land within their empire. Under the new system when a peasant had occupied and paid rent for the land for two years he was considered as its owner. The rights of superior holders were admitted in Bengal, north of Madras and in Oudh and North-Western province (now known as U.P.) when the revenue was collected from them and not from the peasants. This was known as the *Zamindari* system. But in other parts within British territories namely the west of India and most of Madras, very few superior holders were recognised and the revenue was collected directly from the cultivators. This was

called the *ryotwari* system. The ryotwari system was socially more just and liked by the English officials but it was not easy to establish. It, however, fitted in better with more efficient type of administration.

More important and valuable in the land settlement work which compelled the officials to measure every inch of the land, was the human spirit in which it was conducted. When Hary Verelest assumed charge of Governorship of Bengal, succeeding Lord Clive in 1767, he appointed supervisors to see how the land settlement was carried on in the districts. Impressing upon them the desirability of adopting a friendly attitude, the Governor advised : "Among the chief effects which are hoped for from your residence in the province...are to convince the *ryot* (the peasant) that you will be his refuge and the redresser of his wrongs...the honest and direct applications to you will never fail in producing speedy and equitable decisions ; that, after supplying the legal due of Government he (the peasant) may be secure in the enjoyment of the remainder ; and finally, teach him a veneration and effection for the human maxims of our government."[1]

Later Verelest impressed on the supervisors : "Versed as you are in the language, depend on none where you yourself can possibly hear and determine. Let access to you be easy and be careful of the conduct of your dependents."[2] This will remind the reader of the pillar edicts of Emperor Ashoka.

Simultaneously with land settlement, the British administrators turned their attention to the restoration of order in the country plagued by lawlessness. A police force was created to check the criminal tendencies of miscreants and courts of law were established to administer justice.

Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General (1772-85), set up civil and criminal courts of appeal, the *Sadar Diwani Adalat* and *Sadar Nizami Adalat* at Calcutta. By the Regulating Act of 1773, a Supreme Court was established with a Chief Justice and three puisne judges under him. The first Chief Justice was Sir Elijah Impey. Later supreme courts (now high courts) were set up in Madras and Bombay also which were originally intended by the British Parliament to be instruments for curtailing the excesses of the East India Company's servants

in India. The courts were independent of the Governor-General and were called the King's Courts. In administering justice these courts were quite independent and brooked no interference from government functionaries. The presiding judge of the Bombay High Court referring to the position of Governor, the highest executive in the area, declared : "within these walls we own no equal and no superior but God and the King. The East India Company therefore and all those who govern their possessions, however absolute over those whom they consider their subjects, must be told, as they have been told ten thousand times before, that in this court they are entitled to no more precedency and favour than the lowest suiter in it."[3]

Some British administrators were inclined to apply Hindu laws in deciding suits and cases in the courts. Sir William Jones (1746-1794) translated some of the *shastras* (Hindu Codes) for this purpose. But James Mill representing enlightened sections in Britain and India gave quietus to the backward-looking view by saying that the Brahmin laws were "a disorderly compilation of loose, vague, stupid and unintellgible quotations and maxims, selected arbitrarily from books of law, books of devotion and books of poetry, attended with a commentary which only adds to the absurdity and darkness, a farrago by which nothing is defined, nothing established."[4]

Lord Charles Cornwallis (1738-1805) was the first highly cultured and liberal Governor-General. He insisted on enforcing equality for all people in law courts. He told the Directors of the East India Company : "Your possessions in this country cannot be said to be well-governed, nor the lives and property of your subjects to be secure until the shocking abuses and the wretched administration of justice in the Foujdary department can be corrected". The caste distinction in the Hindu community was adversely influencing administration of justice. Added to it, under the Muslim rule the law forbade a Muslim being convicted for capital offence on the evidence, however unchallengeable, of a non-Muslim. Cornwallis abrogated all such unfair laws. He told the Directors : "In order that Hindoos and all classes of people not of the Mohamedan persuasion (who form at least nine-tenths of the inhabitants of

your territories) may enjoy equal security of person and property with the Mohamedans, we have thought proper to abolish a distinction, the absurdity of which is too glaring to require a comment."[5]

While trying to be fair, the British officials did not overlook the deficiencies of their government whenever and wherever they found any. For obvious reasons, Indians were not employed to responsible posts in the early day of the British Raj. Sir Thomas Munro disagreed with this policy. Writing in 1837 to Lord Hastings, the Governor-General, he enumerated the advantages of British rule but added in protest : "These advantages (of British rule) are dearly bought. They are purchased by the sacrifice of independence, of national character, and of whatever renders a people respectable...The consequence, therefore, of the conquest of India by the British arms would be in place of raising, to debase a whole people. There is perhaps no example of any conquest in which the natives have been so completety excluded from all share of the Government of their country as in British India." A year later he wrote again : "Foreign conquerors have treated the natives with violence and often with great cruelty, but none has treated them with so much scorn as we ; none has stigmatised the whole people as unworthy of trust, as incapable of honesty, and as fit to be employed only where we cannot do without them. It seems to me not only ungenerous, but impolitic, to debase the character of a people fallen under our dominion."[6]

Having been tormented by insecurity for many decades and having meekly suffered repression, high-handedness, class distinction and social injustice for centuries, the Indian masses heaved a sigh of relief under the new dispensation. They could see for themselves how different it was from the social order envisaged by the Gita and other Brahmin scriptures. Therefore, if they looked upto the British administrators as heavenly beings, it is no surprise. Tilman Henckel was collector from 1781-1789 in Jessore District of East Bengal (now Bangladesh). For his fatherly care the inhabitants of the area were so grateful that they, in Hindu fashion, made an image of him and offered *puja* (worship) to it.[7] To the harassed Hindus Henckel appeared as the promised *avatar* of the Blessed Lord. "Sir Thomas

Munro was Governor of Madras between the years 1820 and 1827. He was so popular especially in the ceded districts of which he was very fond, that boys of the locality used to be called after him by such names as Munrolappa etc. He himself was called *Mandava rishi* by the grateful public out of affection and love."[8]

A peasant told Sleeman, the Director for Suppression of Thuggee : "A few years ago I could not have gone a hundred yards from my village without having the clothes ripped from my back." Another peasant told Col. James Tod, the famous author of *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* : "Who durst have passed this spot eighteen months ago. They (the ruffians) would have killed you for the bread you had about you. Now we may carry gold." Tod found that the universal greeting to an Englishman in India was *atal raj* (may your rule last for ever.)[9]

Having thus inspired confidence among the common people in the sense of justice and fair play of the British administration, the new rulers paid attention to the spread of education with the purpose of dispelling ignorances and of raising the cultural level of the people. It was strongly held that if the Indians were to achieve their destiny they must be educated. The Charter Act of 1813 sanctioned an annual sum of £ 10000 for "the revival and improvement of literature and the encouragement of the learned natives of India and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of science among the inhabitants of the British territories in India." But there was disagreement on the method and content of education. Supported by British Indologists the ever-alert Brahmin scholars, called pandits, demanded that Indians should be taught their sacred books and other literature in Sanskrit. It was claimed that the ancient literature was a storehouse of all knowledge. But progressive Hindus backed by enlightened British administrators were deadly opposed to it. Rammohan Roy led the opposition and saved India from a catastrophe.

Between 1813-1823 the demand for liberal education became insistent but the East India Company had not developed any policy in this regard. Before 1835 the 25 schools in Calcutta

were run either by Christian missionaries or by private bodies composed of both Englishmen and Indians.

In December 1823 under pressure of the orthodox pandits the Government was about to start a Sanskrit School in Calcutta in addition to the one already running in Benaras when Rammohan addressed a strong protest to the Governor-General. Clinching the issue he said : "The pupils will there (in the Sanskrit schools) acquire what was known two thousand years ago with the addition of vain and empty subtleties since then produced by speculative men, such as is already commonly taught in all parts of India." Roy pointed out how the students would waste a dozen years at such a school in "only acquiring at best niceties of Sanskrit grammar, speculative philosophy of the Vedanta, interpretation of obsolete Vedic passages in Mimamsa and the subtelties of Nyaya Shastras." After referring to the revolutionary changes effected in European education in the days of Bacon, Roy cogently argued : "If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of schoolmen which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sanskrit system of education would be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the Government it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction embracing mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, anatomy with other useful sciences."

Other Hindu progressives supported Rammohan and expressed similar views. The controversy which raised for a number of years was finally ended by the famous minute written on the educational policy of the Government in 1835 by Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-59), the eminent law member of the Governor-General's Council, in which the logic of Rammohan was accepted as correct. The noble Lord bluntly argued :

> "Assuredly it is the duty of the British Government in India to be not only tolerant, but neutral on all religious

> questions. But to encourage the study of a literature admitted to be of small instrinsic value only because that literature inculcates the most serious errors on the most important subjects, is a course hardly reconcilable with reason, with morality, or even with the very neutrality which ought, as we all agree, to be sacredly preserved. It is confessed that a language is barren of useful knowledge. We are told to teach it because it is fruitful of monstrous superstitions. We are to teach false history, false astronomy, false medicine, because we find them in company with a false religion. We abstain and trust we shall always abstain, from giving public encouragement to those who are engaged in the work converting natives to Christianity. And while we act thus, can we reasonably and decently bribe men out of the revenues of the state to waste their youth in learning how they are to purify themselves after touching an ass, or what text of the Vedas they are to repeat to expiate the crime of killing a goat."

In the minute, Macaulay went on to say :

> "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; of class of person Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion and in morals, and in intellect."

In effect Macaulay planned to wean away through education the Indian youth from the pernicious influence of Brahminism and direct them on the path of reason shown by the ancient rationalists of their own land. If we remember that the British rulers were knowingly or unconsciously importing the forgotten Indian philosophy in a new garb, Macaulay's outspoken proposal of creating a class of persons "English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" was unexceptionable and, indeed, most valuable ever made by an Englishman.

Soon after submitting the minute, Macualay wrote to his father : "It is my firm belief that if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolator among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence. And this would be effected without efforts to proselytise, without the smallest interference with religious liberty merely by the natural operation of knowledge and reflection."[10]

As we shall see, alas, the too-optimistic expectation of the famous historian was fulfilled neither in the one case nor in the other. Macaulay, it would appear, was unware of the hold of the Gita on the minds of the Hindus and the resilience of the Brahmins in dealing with the revolutionary movement which the noble Lord thought his scheme would launch.

Be that as it may, Rammohan's advocacy of scientific education was successful and the Hindu reaction suffered a defeat, at any rate for the time being. On March 7, 1835, the Indian Government adopted a resolution making English as the medium of higher education. It said : "The great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone."[11]

The multi-religious composition of the population impelled the British Government to adopt a neutral attitude in the matter of imparting education to the people. They desisted from taking sides and giving preference to one religion over another. "The British adopted religious neutrality as the fundamental principle of their rule," says the nationalist historian Majumdar, "and therefore scrupulously forbade any form of religious teachings, direct or indirect, in schools and colleges supported by the Government."[12]

Once the Government's policy was determined and measures adopted to implement it, education spread throughout the country and an increasing number of students was admitted in the schools. In Bengal alone the number of schools rose from 28, in 1843 to 151 in 1855, and the number of pupils from 4632 in 1843 to 13,163, in 1853. The universities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were incorporated by Acts passed respectively on January 24, 1857, July 18, 1857 and September 5, 1857.

The study of science was also introduced in both schools and colleges. The Calcutta Medical College was the first institution where Western Science was specially taught. The technology spread through engineering works like road-building, canal-digging and later, laying of railway tracks.

With progress in education the policy of keeping out the Indians from civil service was gradually changing. Now the emphasis was on Indianization. Thus while the administration became more Western in outlook, it also began to assume an Indian shape in personnel.

Misconstruing Macaulay's minute, Hindu nationalists have attempted to show that the aim of British educational policy was to produce clerks and henchmen of the foreign Government and not to raise the intellectual standard of the people. Controverting such a belief, R.C. Majumdar remarks :

> "There is a general impression in India that the English education was introduced by the British rulers for their administrative convenience and the course was deliberately designed to make the Indians only fit for clerks. There appears to be little justification for this view."[13]

After adducing the opinions of many eminent Indians and Englishmen to support his point the distinguished historian observes :

> "It (the English education) was primarily intended to be liberal education which would 'remove the darkness of ignorance' but was also looked upon as a means to enable one to take part in the administration of the country and public activities for the benefit of the people."[14]

A belief had been fostered by orthodoxy among Hindu women that a literate girl would become a widow soon after marriage. The superstition was so deep-rooted that both reformers and the Government ignored women's education for a long time. It was the Christian Mission which broke the ice. The missionaries started a girls school as early as 1818 in Chinsurah in Bengal. Next year the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society was formed which opened more such schools. In 1821-23 there were 23 girls schools in Calcutta and its suburbs. The American Missionary Society opened a girls school in 1824. In 1851 one private school for girls was opened in Poona and two at Ahmedabad. By 1854 there were 65 schools for girls in the Bombay Presidency with about 3500 pupils. But the defenders of the Hindu dharma continued to oppose the movement for advancement of women's education. "Any government attempt to establish and staff schools for girls might, if not

handled delicately, outrage not only conservative opinion but the so-called 'enlightened' classes who were curiously unenlightened as far as women were concerned," records the Hindu nationalist historian. However, in the sixties of last century the British administrators ignored the Hindu leaders and by 1875 nearly a thousand girl schools established where no less than seventy thousand pupils received instruction in all branches of learning.

The Charter Act of 1833 had a provision for the establishment of a Law Commission of four members which would prepare a comprehensive code to be applied by civil and criminal courts in the country. Lord Macaulay who drafted the code stated that the aim was "to prepare a body of law which would secure uniformity where you can have it, diversity where you must have it, but in all cases certainty." When after a number of years the code was adopted, promulgated and acted upon in 1861 for the first time in Indian history after the defeat of Buddhist Revolution the scales of justice were evenly held while deciding cases of dispute between castes or between citizens.

Pax Britannica next allowed the enthusiastic administrators to turn their attention to removal of countless social evils some of which appeared abominable in their eyes. This task proved more difficult because it roused the fury and wrath of influential orthodox Hindu leaders who quoted chapter and verse from the holy scriptures and the Gita in support of each and every evil. Among the major abominations first in order came the horrifying rite of sati. Some servants of the Company, had, on their own, opposed it as early as the eighties of the eighteenth century. In 1789 one Brooks, Collector of Shahabad, prevented by force burning of Hindu widows. Job Charnock, a rough kind of Company's employee, who founded Madras, "rescued from flames a Brahmin widow of transcendental loveliness," then married her, and lived a happy life with her until his death in 1793.[15] In 1795, James Elphinston saved a girl—widow of twelve from being consigned to the flames. Some district officers like Sleeman forbade it in the areas under their administration. Charles Metcalfe prohibited it in the territory of Delhi. When a Brahmin pleaded before Sir Charles Napier,

Governor of Sind, that sati was a national custom of Hindus and should not therefore be banned, he retorted : "My nation also has a custom. When men burn women alive, we hang them...Let us all act according to national customs."[16] It reminds one of the equally crushing retort of Aurangzeb.

As early as 1780 the Governor of Madras forbade burning of a Hindu widow but the order was honoured more in breach than in observance. Nevertheless, attempts continued to be made by individual administrators to stop the inhuman rite. In 1813, orders were passed by the British Government which were meant to check the evil but actually encouraged it. According to the order, a widow must not be burned without her will and without permission of the authorities. Both could be obtained under a little pressure.

Meanwhile, the small band of progressive Hindus patiently demanded promulgation of a law to stop the practice. It was Lord William Bentinck, Governor-General (1832-1835), who dared take the risk of provoking fierce orthodox opposition and passed the law to eradicate the evil. On December 4, 1829, sati was declared illegal by Regulation XVII of Bengal Presidency. By it anyone assisting a widow in self-immolation was to be held guilty of culpable homicide and anyone using violence to force a widow to burn herself was liable to death sentence. The Regulation prohibited not only burning of widows but also burial of widows with their dead husbands (a practice observed in certain parts of Bengal). A similar Regulation was passed by the Madras Government on February 2, 1830, and action was also taken by the Bombay Government to make it effective in their area.

The Regulation, as was expected, aroused stiff opposition from the orthodox Hindus who protested that it was an interference in their religion. Failing to get a hearing from the Governor-General, an appeal was preferred to the Privy Council in London in January 1830. But the Directors of the East India Company prepared an overwhelming case in favour of abolition. They were reinforced by a counter-petition of progressive Hindus which Rammohan Roy carried personally to London supporting the Regulation XVII and it was presented to the British Parliament. The appeal of the reactionary

Hindus was dismissed and, significantly, there was not a single disturbance anywhere in India in spite of the Gita and its doctrine of militancy.

Saved from being burned, Hindu widows still languished because they could not remarry under the Hindu law. Some thought that they had been rescued from cruel death only to die by inches. "A widow was the pariah and outcaste of society. She was rigorously excluded from all participation in auspicious ceremonies. She was allowed only one meal in twenty-four hours. Her diet excluded all palatable and agreeable articles of food. On the eleventh day of the new and full moon, twice a month, she was compelled to fast a whole day and night without being given a drop of water to drink. No exception was made even if the widow happened to be child of tender years. Men and women were accustomed and utterly indifferent to the sight of a girl of ten or eleven years, in the trying and steamy summer of Bengal, crying and rolling on the ground in an agony of thirst. Even a mother had to look on helplessly at the distress of a daughter, perhaps a mere child, without daring to offer a drink of water to assauge the child's burning thirst."[17]

In 1820 was born Ishwar Chandra Bannerji to whom the plight of widows became unbearable.

As a student Ishwar Chandra was so brilliant that each and every teacher paid high tributes to his learning and knowledge. He became equally proficient in grammar, poetry, rhetoric, philosophy, astronomy and theology. He was, therefore, called Vidyasagar (Ocean of Learning) and became famous by this name.

Though coming from an orthodox and conservative family of Brahmins he espoused the cause of widow remarriage and stood as the most advanced and intrepid social reformer of the nineteenth century after Rammohan Roy.

Starting as a junior teacher of the Sanskrit College in Calcutta he was promoted to be its Principal and Inspector of Schools. From this high position he fired the first salvo against Brahmin orthodoxy by issuing a small pamphlet to prove that remarriage of virgin Hindu widows was authorized and even enjoined by scriptures. It caused deep indignation

and an upheaval but Vidyasagar persisted and continued publishing tract after tract to fight for the cause. His efforts were crowned with success when the Hindu Widows Remarriage Act (Act XV of 1856) was passed on July 26, 1857. Despite any prevailing custom among the Hindus, the Act enabled widows to remarry and the children born of such weddings were accepted as legitimate.

Three months after the new law had come into force the first widow remarriage was celebrated with an impressive ceremony when many distinguished men like high court judges, professors and businessmen participated in it. Some other similar marriages followed and Vidyasagar's only son also married a widow, so that it may not be open to anyone that the reformer did not practice what he preached.

In 1891, the Government passed an Act to extricate women from the cruel hands of sex ridden religious men. It prohibited the consummation of marriage before the wife had reached the age of twelve. It will be recalled that the Hindu law-givers, the notorious Medhatithi among them, had ordained the marriage of *nagnikas* and it was considered a disgrace for the family if girls remained unmarried till 12 years of age.

Vidyasagar did not rest with legalization of widow remarriage. He initiated a movement for the abolition of the pernicious custom of polygamy among the Hindus. He collected facts and figures and on their basis showed how destructive and killing the custom was. In 86 villages of Hooghli district in Bengal alone there were 197 kulin Brahmins who had married 2288 wives. A man of 55 had 107 wives, a boy of twelve had six, and a child of five, two.

A stout champion of the education of girls and women, Vidyasagar worked untiringly for its advancement. He fully cooperated with David Hare and Drinkwater Bethune both Englishmen (*malechhas*) who had dedicated themselves to the cause of women's education but were encountering stiff opposition from the orthodox section.

Vidyasagar was no respector of *Varnashrama* (caste system) ; for him there were no untouchables ; all humanity appealed equally to him. When a sweeper women, his neighbour, was attacked by cholera he went at once to her unclean hut, tended

her with his own hands and stayed with her the whole day until she was out of danger. Vidyasagar passed away in 1891.

Lord William Bentinck dealt with the problem of thuggee. He opened a new department for suppression of the thugs and placed a very able and energetic officer, Major Sleeman, in its charge. Gathering full information about the desperadoes, Sleeman chased them from province to province and made it impossible for them to operate. Within a decade thuggee became extinct. Those thugs found guilty of heinous crimes were hanged but others were admitted to an industrial school established at Jabalpur for them to become artisans and earn their livelihood in a respectable manner.

The practice of murdering infants had been forbidden quite early in British rule by Regulation VI in 1802.

The Charter Act of 1833 required the Governor-General-in-Council to abolish slavery as soon as it could be safely and conveniently done. Accordingly Act V of 1843 made slavery illegal. It became an offence to keep slaves and trafficking in them could be punished under the Indian Penal Code.

Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General (1848-56), who brought British rule in India to perfection, passed the Caste Disabilities Removal Act, also called the Emancipation Act. Its importance can be judged by its wording : "So much of any law or usage now in force within the territories subject to the Government of East India Company as inflicts upon any person forfeiture of right or property, or may be held in any way to impair or effect any right of inheritance, by reason of his or her renouncing, or having been excluded from the communion of any religion, or being deprived of caste, shall cease to be enforced as law in the courts of the East India Company and in the courts established by Royal Charter in the said territories."[44]

With chaos and anarchy having become things of the past, law and order fully restored and major social evils suppressed, the Government bent its energy on developing India economically. Writing to Queen Victoria in January 1843, Lord Ellenborough said that "he can see no limit to the future prosperity of India if it be governed with due respect for the feelings and even the prejudices, and with a careful regard for the interests of the people, with the resolution to make their well-being the

chief object of the Government, and not the pecuniary advantages of the nation of strangers to which Providence has committed the rule of this distant empire."[16]

Lord Dalhousie introduced the railways, the first line being laid down in 1853, in Bombay. It was extended year after year to other areas. The Governor-General also introduced postal services and electric telegraph. The facilities of communication and transport increased the flow of trade and within 50 years from 1858 to 1908 overseas trade grew five times in volume. It also lessened the incidence of hardships during the recurring periods of famine as food grains could be speedily despatched from places with surpluses to scarcity areas.

The rapid development of the railway system proved to be of great value in expansion of commerce and industry; it helped in the mining of coal and iron as also in the establishing of jute, cotton, tea, cofee and other industries. The first cotton mill which became a success was opened in 1853 in Bombay and then the industry made such good progress that in 1914 India was counted as fourth among the world's cotton manufacturing countries. In 1855, the first jute-spinning machine was installed in Bengal and the industry grew rapidly thereafter. J.N. Tata (1839-1904) a Parsee entrepreneur, encouraged by the British authorities, founded the Tata Iron and Steel Company in Bihar which eventually became for a time the largest single steel works in the world. In tea production India rivalled China by 1900 and supplied Britain the major part of her need. The capital no doubt largely came in the beginning from Britain for industrial expansion but after 1900 an increasing proportion was contributed by prosperous Indian commericial classes especially in the segment of cotton, iron and steel industries.

In 1890 there were only 700 registered factories but there after there was a rapid increase in the number of industrial establishments so much so that by 1939 the figure had risen to 10,000 employing a labour force of over two million men and women. Consequently there was appreciable increase in production; from £ 5 million worth goods produced in 1834 it went up to 5259 million by 1928.

The poverty of the peasantry, however, continued to be a source of worry. Therefore the Government's attitude towards the agricultural labourers tended to be protective. Land legislation was biased against the absentee land lords. In a despatch, Lord Mayo, Governor-General (1869-72), stated: "For generations to come the progress of India in wealth and civilisation must be directly dependent on her progress in agriculture—There is perhaps no country in the world in which the state has so immediate and direct an interest in agriculture." Progress of agriculture depends upon development of irrigation. This work had begun as early as 1820 with the repair of the Mughal canals in the north and irrigation tanks in the south. It was pushed forward by Governor-General Dalhousie and later by some Viceroys. In 1870 a Department of Agriculture, Revenue and Commerce was created by the order of Lord Mayo. Under the supervision of the Department the work of irrigating barren lands was taken up more vigorously; steady progress was made in building up a canal system which by the end of the century was the most extensive in the world. "By 1909 the 13,000 miles of primary and secondary canals in the country with 42,000 miles of tributaries irrigated 23 million acres of land." In the Punjab and North Western Province the canals brought big prosperity when deserts suddenly bloomed. New towns sprang up and flourished wherever water became available for irrigating land.

To the orthodox Hindus even such fruitful work seemed interference in religion. There was much opposition to the building of the Ganga Canal because "dissipation of water seemed impious" and "was bound to arouse the displeasure of the gods." But giving such outcry no weight, the Government proceeded on with the nation-building work. Lord Lytton, Governor-General (1876-80) launched a famine control scheme which saved the Indian people from the scourge of recurring famines for more than six decades. By the end of the ninteenth century the extension of irrigation system and organisation of transport had gone so far that direct deaths from starvation were "almost unknown."

Of all the British Governors-General who were devoted to improving the cultural and economic life of the Indians, Lord

Curzon (1898-1905) was the best and perhaps the last. Despite being a chronic invalid, his capacity for work was marvellous. His colleagues in the Council and subordinates in the Central Secretariat were simply amazed at his huge output when the most industrious among them could not claim even one-tenth of his performance. No sooner was he in the saddle than he prepared schemes for introducing wide-ranging reforms calculated to benefit the people, especially the poorer sections among them.

Nothing pleased him more than alleviation of the suffering of poverty-stricken peasants through transformation of land. Before he left the shores of India, Upper Chenab, Upper Jhelum and Lower Bari Doab Canals were authorised at a cost of seven crores and fifty lakhs of rupees. He reorganised the agricultural department with an Inspector-General at its head. He created banks to advance loans to the Agriculturists. The number of agricultural schools and colleges were instituted throughout the country, and a high grade agricultural institute was founded at Pusa (later transferred to New Delhi) where educated young men were trained to look after the needs of the land.

Curzon's other reforms for the good of the neglected sections were the adoption of Punjab Land Alienation Act which rescued indebted agriculturists from the clutches of rapacious money lenders into whose hands, vast tracts of land were rapidly passing, the creation of cooperative credit societies and new schemes of land assessment.

Lord Curzon was dismayed to find that four in five villages lacked a school. Calling a meeting of the provincial directors of public instruction and vice chancellors of the universities he personally drafted and got adopted one hundred and fifty resolutions by the assembly. Primary education was spread ; training colleges started, teachers' salaries raised and an increasing number of students without distinction of caste, creed or sex afforded opportunity to learn. Nearly two hundred colleges were affiliated to the universities. Believing that a well-stocked public library was an effective means of educating the people, he established the Imperial (now National) Library of India in Calcutta. What an outrage against the

Hindu scriptures which had imposed a ban on the spread of learning among women, shudras and outcast.

To minimise chances of bribery, torture and misbehaviour by officials, he set up the police department on a firmer basis compatible in status with the covenanted service of the ICS; he brought the Criminal Investigation Bureau into being.

Curzon had plans to Indianise the army in which then all commissioned officers were Englishmen. He was rebuffed by the Home Government on the ground that it would involve "black man commanding the white man." But the Viceroy's sense of justice revolted. He strongly protested and had his way. The first step to Indianise the Army was taken by establishing the Imperial Cadet Corps.

Curzon was a multi-splendoured personality. He was distressed to find old places, temples, viharas and mosques, monuments of great Indian architecture, crumbling and in ruins. He established the Archaeology Department and engaged Sir John Marshall to protect the monuments. When Christian missionaries raised objections the reply he gave was characteristic of a cultured man :

> "Art and beauty, and the reverence that is owning to all that has evoked human genius or has inspired human faith, are independent of creed and in so far as they touch the sphere of religion, are embraced by the common religion of all mankind...What is beautiful, what is historic, what tears the mask off the face of the past, and helps us to read its riddle and to look it in the eyes, these, and not the dogmas of a combative theology, are the principal criteria to which we must look."[17]

Within six months of his assuming office, Curzon read in the Press that an elderly Burmese lady had been raped in broad day light by British soldiers of the famous West Kent Regiment. His moral indignation knew no bounds. What deeply pained him was that his countrymen in responsible positions should try to hush up the matter. He told the Secretary of State for India :

> "Such cases eat into my soul. That such gross outrages should occur in the first place in a country under British rule and then that every body, commanding

officers, officials, juries, departments should conspire to screen the guilty is, in my judgement, a black and permanent blot on the British name. I mean, so far as one can do it, to efface this stain as I am here."[18]

Curzon proved true to his word and punished the culprits though by doing so he earned the hostility of the British Army. But he stuck to his guns and in answer to the outcry he said with firmness :

"These dreadful cases will never be stopped by concealment or evasion or excuses. They will only be stopped by punishment of the offenders. It is disagreeable to all of us to see a brave and famous British Regiment guilty of these atrocities. But it is much more than disagreeable, it is dangerous, to pass them by with impunity.[19]

Reports reached Curzon in 1903 of assault by Englishmen on helpless Indians in Assam. He was told that the guardians of law and order took no notice of these and the culprits even when apprehended were never convicted and punished. He was furious and thundered that such a gross and obvious miscarriage of justice should not be condoned : "All Englishmen in India are banded together in a conspiracy to gloss over whatever an Englishman does; and I have no doubt they bitterly resent my attitude. But I see very clearly that we can only continue to hold this country by fairness and justice; and if I am given sufficient health, vow that when I leave I will, without having abated one jot of our necessary authority or prestige, have placed the relations between the two races on a better basis."

While preparing civil and criminal codes for India Macaulay wanted to bring all European British subjects under the full jurisdiction of the courts of the Company but he failed. However by Act XI of 1839 Englishmen were placed under the jurisdiction of the courts in civil matters. In 1873 it was enacted that a European could be tried only by a European magistrate. When Lord Ripon Viceroy, (1880-84), introduced the Ilbert Bill to have Europeans tried by Indian Session Judges, the European community raised a storm and the Viceory was

compelled to grant the Europeans the right of being heard by a jury "half of whose members should be Europeans."

Now Curzon extended the jurisdiction of the courts so that distinctions of race were altogether abolished in legal matters.

The enlightened and liberal policy of Lord Curzon was bound to produce good results. While in 1876-77 the Government budget carried a deficit of over one crore and fifty lakhs rising to about 30 crores in the following year, in 1898-9 there was a surplus of one crore and thirty lakhs. Thereafter throughout his tenure of office it was surplus budget—in 1900 nearly one crore and fifty lakhs, in 1902-3 over four crores and fifty lakhs and in 1903-4 a little more than that.

Happy at his achievement, Curzon declared at the Delhi Durbar in 1903 : "The India of the future will, under Providence, not be an India of diminishing plenty, of empty prospect, or of justifiable discontent, but one of expanding industry, of awakened faculties, of increasing prosperity, and of more widely distributed comfort and wealth."[20]

Curzon disagreed with Lord Kitchner, the Commander-in-Chief, on the question of appointment of the Military Member of Viceroy's Council, which led to his resignation in 1905. Before bidding good bye to India he delivered a speech at Byculla Club in Bombay in which he described the ideal which he set before himself while ruling India. It is refreshing to read it today :

> "Let it be our ideal all the same to fight for the right, to abhor the imperfect, the unjust or the mean, to swerve neither to the right hand, nor to the left, to care nothing for the flattery or applause or odium or abuse—it is so easy to have any of them in India; never to let your enthusiasm be soured or your courage grow dim; but to remember that the Almighty has placed your hand on the greatest of his ploughs, in whose furrows the nations of the future are germinating and taking shape, to drive the blade a little forward in your time, and to feel that somewhere among these millions you have left a little justice or happiness or prosperity, a sense of manliness or moral dignity, a spring of patriotism, a dawn of intellectual enlightenment or a stirring of duty where it did not exist before—that is enough, that is Englishman's justifi-

> cation in India. It is good enough for his watchword while he is here, for his epitaph when he is gone. I have worked for no other aim."[21]

As we shall see presently Hindu nationalists did not like Lord Curzon at all and they never forgave his sharp and incisive criticism of their hypocrisy, lust for power and crooked ways which he frankly made. But in the estimation of an impartial student of history the Viceroy is entitled to be reckoned as a pioneer-founder of modern India.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Indian subcontinent had achieved stability and its people security never achieved by their forbears since the Vedic times. The tranquillity of life and economic betterment were reflected in the growing population of the country. Whereas in the second half of the sixteenth century the total population was estimated to be not more than 100 millions, in the succeeding 150 years it rose to only 130 millions. In 1872, when the first census was taken under the British rule the population had grown to 206 millions; and in 1901 it was 294 millions.

Even in the thirties of the nineteenth century leaders like Raja Rammohan Roy, Dwarka Nath Tagore, Prasanna Kumar Tagore and others acknowledged the blessings of the British rule when they stated in a memorial to the Supreme Court in 1838 that the Indians "offered up regular prayers to the objects of their worship for the success of British arms from deep conviction that under the sway of that nation their improvement, both mental and social, would be promoted" and that they considered "the cause of the British as their own." Prasanna Kumar Tagore went even to the extent of declaring that he would prefer English Govenment to any other, even to Hindu Government."[22] Rammohan Roy has recorded in his writing that "the enlightened people looked upon the English as delieverers rather than as conquerors and that the citizens of Calcutta offered prayers for the victory of the British during the Third Maratha and Nepal Wars." Meeting forty-seven years later in the first session of the Indian National Congress in 1885, eminent leaders unanimously praised the British rule and enumerated the gifts it conferred upon India. While W.C. Bonnarji President of the Congress, counted the gifts

like law and order, the railways, the post and telegraph, modern education and Western civilisation, O.A. Hume, the founder-member of the Congress, gave vent to the feeling of the delegates when at the end of the three day session he led them in three resounding cheers for Her Majesty the Queen.

The contemporary Hindu nationalists will perhaps contend that these are anachronistic statements which do not reflect balanced views about the British rule, or the true mind of the patriotic Indians. We can therefore do no better than quote excerpts from the general review of the British rule made in 1936 by R.C. Majumdar in the *History and Culture of the Indian People* which has been recognised by the Nationalist Congress Governments as the standard text on the subject :

> "The gradual evolution of an efficient system of administration is one of the most remarkable phases of the history of British rule in India. History does not record a similar instance of a body of foreigners, devoting so much energy and making such continuous and steady efforts to improve the machinery of Government in the dependent or subject country...By methods of trial and failure, there emerged a framework of administration that has stood the test of time and may well be regarded as one of the richest legacies bequeathed by the British to India...The executer and the judicial branches of administration attained a degree of efficiency which India is not known to have reached at any previous period...The efficiency and freedom from corruption which they displaced as a class were hardly known before, and will probably remain the ideal and despair of many generations of Indians...The corollary of the rule of law was the equality of all before the law, which was altogether a novel feature in India."

Majumdar concludes the review thus :

> "It would have appeared incredible to Ashoka, Samundragupta, Akbar and Aurangzeb, not to speak of others, that their mere verbal order or wish was not sufficient to kill or imprison a person. The Native states of India followed the old rule and offered a striking contrast to British India in this respect...not the least in importance, is the establishment of a uniform system of administration with English as the court language all over this great subcontinent. This, together with the

> development of transport and communication by means of improving old roads and building new ones, opening up of railway and telegraphs, and introducing cheap postage, transformed the face of the country and ushered in the conception of one India."[23]

One blemish which darkened the shining picture of British rule was the social attitude of the rulers towards Indians. There was no dearth of snobs among the administrators; the district officer who worked all day for the poorest peasant and the humblest worker was disinclined to meet in the evening on equal terms the highest born Indian. "Even more galling to a sensitive people", writes Percival Spear "perhaps than the violence of ill-bred white was the aloofness and hauteur of many officials who could turn correctness into a form of contempt."[24]

Nevertheless, if there ever was a golden age in Indian history it was neither under the Mauriyas (as the Buddhists claim) nor under the Guptas (as the Hindus claim) nor under the Mughals (as the Muslim claim) but under the British in the nineteenth century. Despite high-handedness and racial arrogance of individual Englishmen in positions of authority and power to which reference will be made later these hundred years were the most secure, most fruitful and the happiest for the people in the British territories because, as the Indian saying goes, the lion and the lamb could peacefully drink water at the same river ghat during this period.

30

Bharat Mata comes into her own

FROM very early times unity of the Indian subcontinent has been one of the cherished ideals of all patriots. With the spread of the Vedic religion all over the country, the aim was achieved culturally but, politically, it remained an unfulfilled desire though under the Mauriyas, the Guptas and the Mughals most of the subcontinent was integrated. Only the southern apex continued to defy the great monarchs of these dynasties. Probably Ashoka could have conquered the country below Mysore too but as his greater ambition was to spread Dhamma rather than acquire territory, he stopped short of annexing the south.

No sooner did they become sovereign rulers of Bengal and the coastal regions of Bomby and Madras, than the British realized that the Indian subcontinent was indivisible if the object was to establish peace and develop it economically for the progress and prosperity of the people. Lord Wellesley (1798-1805), the sixth Governor-General, felt that the British rulers were in the strong position of enforcing a scheme for such a unification. The native princes were, he saw, incompetent and involved in hatching intrigues against each other. Any chieftain engaged in a war would appeal to the British for help. A native ruler to whom military protection was given

had to pay money and if, and when, he fell into arrears, he was called upon to cede some part of his territory. Lord Wellesley gave this practice a new shape. He elaborated the plan and called it subsidiary alliance. According to it any prince who accepted the plan had to recognise the British as paramount power. He was not allowed any independence to make war or peace with any other native prince or outside power. He had to employ British troops in his service and to pay the cost of their maintenance. He could not employ any non-Indian in his service and he was required to keep a British Resident at his court.

Lord Wellesley's scheme was eminently successful and proved to be a major step towards the unification of India. One after the other a number of Indian princes voluntarily or under force of circumstances entered into the alliance and, as a result, the British emerged within a few years as the only paramount power in India. For over forty years after Wellesley the operation of the scheme changed the map of India because under the authority of the alliance many states, whose rulers proved unfit, corrupt, or unreliable, were annexed to the British territories.

In 1848, Lord Dalhousie was appointed as Governor General. He was perhaps the most energetic and ablest of all the British rulers of the nineteenth century. He had no sympathy with native rulers, particularly with those who were weaklings and lacked the qualities of statesmanship. Knowing the appalling conditions which obtained in most of the states, he firmly and rightly believed that British administration was a great blessing to the people and the earlier the states were abolished the better it would be. He laid down his famous doctrine of lapse according to which the territory of a prince who died without a natural heir would pass on to the paramount power. He did not allow any prince to adopt a child to continue the dynasty. He considered chronic misgovernment as valid ground for annexation. In the course of eight years of his rule (1848-56), he annexed eight territories including two Maratha states and the great Muslim kingdom of Oudh.

By the time Lord Dalhousie left the subcontinent had been completely integrated as never before in Indian history. The people were pleased with it and contrary to the common belief, even some of the native chiefs and dignitaries welcomed the British paramountcy. "Whatever we might think of this", writes Majumdar about the downfall of the Sikhs, "there is no doubt that many chiefs in the Panjab including Lal Singh, Teja Singh and Gulab Singh, who occupied the highest positions in the State, were of the same view and preferred a British protectorate to independence."[1]

With the exception of tiny pockets like Goa, Chandernagore and Pondicherry which were ruled by other European powers, the entire country from Gilgit to Cape Comorin and Kathiawad to Manipur, came under the one central authority of the British. The old dream of Indian patriots had come true. For the first time in their history the Hindus could acclaim that Bharatavarsha was one not only geographically and culturally but also politically and administratively. This was possible under a secular form of Government though run by foreigners who cherished faith in the infallibility of reason and aimed at administering human justice. "No doubt", says Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji, "the greatest gift of British rule in India has been its political unification under a paramount power which was able to impose its supreme authority upon all the states in regard to their defence, external relations, foreign policy and certain economic interests of common concern to the whole of india."[2]

It may be noted that the Hindu nationalists have always denounced both Wellesley and Dalhousie for their schemes of uniting India though they spare no words to lavishly praise Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel for a similar plan of abolishing 500-odd states after Independence which was implemented under no less coercive methods and ended with a dishonourable breach of pledges regarding privy purses solemnly given to the princes by the Congress Government of India.

Unification of the Indian subcontinent was for the British not an end in itself : it was a means for the achievement of a laudable goal : to awaken the people spiritually and make them tolerant, progressive, self-reliant, brave, democratic and happy.

The British were fired with a mission and they were determined to fulfil it.

As is well-known, until 1858 India was ruled by the East India Company whose main interest in the occupation of the subcontinent was profit through trade and business. In the beginning, the officials of the Company were little concerned with the material or moral uplift of the conquered people. The Indians who had passed through horrible experiences during the dismal period of chaos which followed the disintegration of the Mughal Empire and the domination of desperadoes, welcomed the new foreign masters who, despite their early record of avarice and greed, brought about order where lawlessness prevailed before. Pax Britannica was a great boon to the harassed million; no Indian, however patriotic and progressive, was bothered about self-rule. But, incredible as it would seem, these were British politicians and administrators even in the early years of their rules who believed that India belonged to the Indians and could foresee that sooner or later the British shall have to withdraw and leave the country to its people.

The Charter of the East India Company granted by the British Government was periodically renewed, which afforded the House of Commons opportunity to exercise some control over the working of the Company. The Charter was renewed by Parliamentary Acts in 1773, 1784, 1793 and 1813. The Acts made vital changes in the authority of the Company, scope of its work and the status of its servants. Pitt's Act of 1784 set up a Board of Control comprising six experienced men to supervise the doings of the Company which had a sobering effect on the Indian administration. The civil service of the Company was divided into commercial and political branches. Cornwallis told the employees that they were either merchants or administrators but not both. By the Act of 1813, the Company lost the monopoly of Indian trade but retained her right of business in tea. The Act of 1833 deprived the Company of this too and thus "the union of the trader and the sovereign" was finally dissolved to protect the Indians against exploitation by the Company and extortion at the hands of its officers. What is of great interest to us is the

publication of some statements made in the course of discussions in the Parliament when the Bills were on the anvil.

The British rule has been unique in the history of India, indeed, in the history of the world. There is no instance of any other conqueror planning and devising methods, soon after occupation of a country, to educate and train the subject people for self-rule and to relinquish his hold when such preparation is complete. Long before there was any demand from the Indians for liberation, much less for severence of connection with the ruling nation, we find, prominent member of the ruling race visualising the day of India's emancipation. Such views are emphatically voiced by British politicians and administrators from the days when only a part of the subcontinent had been brought under occupation and the forces of conquest were still marching ahead.

While the Bill of 1813 was being debated upon, a certain Buckingham M.P. suggested that the Supreme Council in India should include representatives of both British and Indian population "in order to make a beginning at least of that system of self-government to which they (the Indians) ought to advance with all our colonies as fast as possible."[3] It was remarkable for a British public man to make such bold and liberal proposal at the beginning of the nineteenth century, seventy-two years before the Indian National Congress was born.

Yet this was not a solitary example of noble intentions of a member of the ruling race. The Marquess of Hastings (1813-1823), who resigned as Governor-General, recorded in his *Private Journal* on May 17, 1818 :

> "A time not very remote will arrive when England will, on sound principles of policy, wish to relinquish the domination which she has gradually and unintentionally assumed over this country and from which she cannot at present recede. In that hour it would be the proudest boast and most delightful reflection that she had used her sovereignty towards enlightening her temporary subjects, so to enable the native communities to walk alone in the paths of justice, and to maintain with probity towards their benefactors that commercial intercourse in which we should then find a solid interest."[4]

The accuracy of this prophecy simply is astounding.

A year later, in 1819, Elphinston wrote that "the most desirable death for us to die of should be the improvement of the natives, reaching such a pitch as would render it impossible for a foreign nation to retain the Government."[5] In 1820; the *Indian Gazette* carried an article by a high placed Englishman in the course of which he observed : "The separation of India from Great Britain cannot, in the nature of things, be prevented. It must come sooner or latter... the true system of governing them (the Indians) should aim to provide that the separation shall be safe, gradual and friendly whenever it may take place."[6]

The aim and intention of British administration in India could not be better expressed than in the words of Sir Thomas Munroe (1820-27) one of the ablest and most sympathetic governors of Madras Presidency : "We should look upon India not as a temporary possession but us one which is to be maintained permanently until the natives shall in some future age have, abandoned most of their superstitions and prejudices, and become sufficiently enlightened to frame a regular government for themselves, and to conduct and preserve it. Whenever such a time shall arrive, it will probably be best for both countries that the British control over India should be gradually withdrawn."[7]

Lord Macaulay has been frequently pilloried by the Indian nationalists for saying in his brilliant minute on education referred to earlier that the aim of spreading education should be "to form a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, and in morals and in intellect." But how wide of the mark is the nationalist criticism of his intentions can be seen from the sublime sentiments which he expressed in a speech in the House of Commons when the Charter Act of 1833 was under debate. He exclaimed : "It may be that the public mind of Indian may expand under our system till it has outgrown that system; that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government; that having become instructed in European knowledge, they may, in some future age, demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come, I know not. But

never will I attempt to avert or retard it. Whenever it comes, it will be the proudest day in English history."[8]

Sir Charles Trevelyan, another luminary of the ruling race and one well-versed in Indian affairs, also hoped that as a result of education the Indians would achieve independence without any struggle or mutual exasperation and "we shall have exchanged profitable subjects for still more profitable allies."[9] In the evidence he gave before the Parliamentary Committee he stressed : "The existing connection between two such distant countries as England and India cannot in the nature of things be permanent, no effort of policy can prevent the natives from ultimately regaining their independence."

Major-General Lionel Smith was more emphatic and outspoken while giving evidence before the Parliamentary Committee on October 6, 1831. He admitted that Western education would make the Indians "feel the value of governing themselves" and therefore "the effect of imparting education will be to turn us out of the country." But he would welcome such development and not regret it, for experience had shown that "America has been of more value to us separate than as a colony."[10]

On August 3, 1835, Sir Charles Metcalfe passed the famous Press Law to remove all restraints upon the periodical Press in India. It was fiercely opposed by diehard British politicians. Defending his measure the Governor-General remarked :

> "It cannot be, that we are permitted by divine authority to be here merely to collect the revenues of the country, pay the establishment necessary to keep possession, and get into debt to supply the deficiency. We are doubtless here for higher purposes, one of which is to pour the enlightened knowledge and civilisation, the arts and sciences of Europe, over the land, and thereby improve the condition of the people. Nothing, surely, is more likely to conduce these ends than the liberty of the Press."[11]

It is not suggested that such was the sole trend in thinking of British public men and administrators. To be sure, there were those who thought otherwise and behaved haughtily like all conquerors of foreign lands in bygone ages. For

instance, Lord Ellenborough, Governor-General (1842-44), speaking in the House of Lords, fulminated : "Our very existence depends upon the exclusion of the (Indians from) military and political power. We have won the empire by the sword and we shall preserve it by the same means." Lord Elgin, also spoke in the same strain. Some of the British functionaries even opposed introduction and popularisation of modern education in India. But fortunately such obscurantist die-hards never got the upper hand in the India office of the British Government during the nineteenth century.

As an outcome of the persistent efforts of the British liberals, the Charter Act of 1833 placed the Englishmen and the Indians on the same footing in respect of participation in Indian administration by laying down in clear terms that "no native of India nor any natural-born subject therein shall by reason only of his religion, place of birth, descent, colour, or any of them, be disabled from holding any place, office or employment under the Company."

It is well to remember that the momentous pronouncements closing the gap between the rulers and the ruled by raising the political status of the Indians were made in the first half of the ninteenth century under pressure of liberal opinion in Britain. So far as the Indians themselves were concerned, the masses were happy with the restoration of law and order and security of life under the new dispensation. Not having known any freedom for over fifteen hundred years under native rulers or Muslim kings they did not mind who held the sceptre so long as they were left unmolested. Politically conscious and educated Indians of all shades of opinion cherished faith in the honesty and sense of fairness of the British masters. The Englishman, they thought, had to be convinced of the justice of any demand and India's liberation would not be long in coming.

This belief was not without foundation. For, throughout the nineteenth century, a band of high-souled Englishmen, inspired by the liberal and democratic institutions of their homeland, felt real and deep sympathy for India. They did what they could to translate their good and noble intentions into practice. The enlightened British public was convinced

that poor and ignorant India would be a drag on Britain and would in no way add to her prosperity. In his great speech already referred to Macaulay said in the House of Commons: "It would be, on most selfish view of the case, far better for us that the people of India were well-governed and independent of us, than ill-governed and subject to us; that they were ruled by their own kings, but wearing our broad-cloth, and working with our cutlery, than that they were performing their salams to English collector and English magistrate but were too ignorant to value, or too poor to buy, English manufacturers."[12]

When the liberals were admonished for their impatience and reminded that the ignorance of the Indians was colossal and as such it would be ages before they could appreciate the blessings of freedom or gift of democratic institutions, they used to retort that it was the duty of English rulers to awaken India enabling her people to enjoy liberty. "The natives will not rise against us", wrote Sir Charles Trevelyan, "we shall stoop to raise them; there will be no reaction because their will be no pressure; the national activity will be fully and harmlessly employed in acquiring and diffusing European knowledge, and in naturalising European institutions." He briefly described a plan how India could achieve freedom peacefully and constitutionally.

> "The educated classes, knowing that the elevation of their country on these principles can only be worked out under our protection will naturally cling to us... the change will thus be peaceably and gradually effected; there will be no struggle, no mutual exasperation; the natives will have independence after first learning how to make good use of it, and we shall exchange profitable subjects for still more profitable allies... Trained by us to happiness and independence, and endowed with our learning and political institutions, India will remain the proudest monument of British benevolence; and we shall long continue to reap, in the affectionate attachment of the people, and in a commercial intercourse with their splendid country, the fruit of that liberal and enlightened policy which suggested to us this line of conduct."[13]

When in 1855, the British Parliament was considering the renewal of the Company Charter, F. J. Halliday, Lt. Governor of Bengal, in his evidence before a Committe of the House of Commons, said : "I believe that our mission in India is to qualify them (the Indians) for governing themselves. I say also that the measures of the Government for a number of years past have been advisedly directed to so qualifying them."[14]

By the middle of the nineteenth century the British rule had performed near miracles of not only uniting the whole subcontinent but also of bringing orderliness and of stabilising administration in all parts of the country. The dreadful ones of the social evils had been uprooted, the economic life of the people improved and communication links like roads, railways, post and telegraph, well established. With the spread of education an increasing number of young men were becoming conscious of its rights and responsibilities as citizens of the State. The fire of patriotism had started to burn in their breasts. Because the new State was reared on secular principles, the distinction of caste, creed and colour was gradually fading away. Brahminism was by no means dead but its dominance in social life had received a set back. The forces of spiritual liberation and progress suppressed for over a thousand years were being unleashed afresh. The educated young men were aspiring to compete with the capable rulers and stand side by side with them in all walks of life. The more intelligent boys even sat for Indian Civil Services (ICS) examination and indeed four of them were declared successful in 1869 and, therefore, fit enough to hold responsible jobs in the administration. Bharat Mata was at long last coming into her own. The time was not far off when India would take up the early threads of free-thought which had been snapped in the early centuries of the Christian era by the rise of neo-Brahminism, and regain her spiritual freedom and real self. From the trend of events since the days of Warren Hastings, the first Governor General (1773-85), it was commonly believed that the transformation, both cultural and political, would be peaceful and smooth; preparations were therefore started to create an organisation which would be instrumental for achievement of this aim.

Among the many patriots who had imbibed the Western culture and zealously worked for building Indian nationalism on secular foundations the outstanding three were : Dadabhai Naororji (1825-1917), Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901) and Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1913).

Born in a poor Parsi family, Dadabhai distinguished himself as a Professor of Mathematics who evinced deep interest in public affairs. When on August 16, 1852, the first political body called Bombay Association was formed in the rooms of Elphinstone Institution where he was educated and employed, Dadabhai made his maiden speech on political reforms. The Association drew a petition for submission to the British Parliament for an enlightened system of Government and admission of Indians into the Civil Service and the Legislative Councils.

Dadabhai believed that British public opinion had to be informed about Indian conditions to accelerate the pace of reforms in India. In 1855, relinquishing the job of teaching he proceeded to England as a partner of a business firm which opened a branch in London. For half a century thereafter dedicated himself to the self-chosen mission of educating the overseas masters of his homeland. In 1866, in collaboration with another patriot, W.C. Bonnarjee, he started London Indian Society with the object of bringing Englishmen and Indians together. The Society was forbidden to discuss religious subjects. It was later on broadbased and called East India Association. It remained in existence for over fifty years playing the geat role of paving the way for India's emancipation.

In the very first meeting of the Association Dadabhai, reviewing the British policy in India, declared his political aims from which he never swerved in his lifetime :

> "It is gratifying and hopeful to find that the statesmen who rule and the thinkers who guide the policy of this country have distinctly seen and clearly enunciated that India should be ruled for India's sake; that the true and only tower of strength to the English rule is not a hundred thousand English soldiers, but the willing consent and grateful loyalty of the people themselves; and

> that when the time comes for a separation, and which I trust is far distant, the world may rejoice in a glorious chapter added to its history, of the regeneration of an old but unfortunate race, and India may for ever remember gratefully the benefactors who restored her to more than her ancient splendour and civilization."[15]

Within a few months of the establishment of East India Association its branches were established in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and other cities. Dadabhai was shuttled between England and India to popularise the aims of the Association among the peoples of both the countries. He became an esteemed public figure. "Since the days of Rammohan Roy", observed the *Native Opinion*, "no Indian had achieved a more distinguished reputation both in India and England."[16] He was called the Father of Indian Nationalism and later on affectionately addressed as the Grand Old Man of India.

Dadabhai wrote and spoke on India's problems as no one else did in his time. He frequently brought grievances of his compatriots to the notice of the British Government. His writings and speeches were published in a big volume entitled *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* which stirred liberal British thinkers to action. In the beginning of 1882 he published a monthly journal called *The Voice of India* from London.

His keen sense of responsibility, dedication to selfless service and love of truth endeared Dadabhai to the British people who elected him to the Parliament on July 5, 1892. As his biographer, R.P. Masani, says "the whole of India was greatly moved by feelings of the deepest gratitude to the English constituency that had returned an Indian to the Imperial Parliament. Such a thing was possible only in a free country like England. The elections had shown that the instincts of political freedom and the fairness of the British public had triumphed. They had given a concrete illustration of the elasticity of the British Constitution and demonstrated better than all official declarations the equality of British citizens, wherever born and brought up."[17]

As the first Indian M.P. Dadabhai rendered yeoman service to the Indian cause. He tabled a Bill to raise a debate on

the question of the Civil Service Examination to provide that the examination should be simultaneously held in India and in the United Kingdom. Not the Bill but a resolution to the same effect moved subsequently was adopted by the House. It was a great victory.

Till the last days of his long life, Dadabhai never countenanced chauvinism or any hostility towards the Western culture. He had complete confidence in the good intentions of the British rulers and had no doubt in his mind that India would achieve freedom by stages under their enlightened rule. He refused to work with even an Englishman who espoused extremism. In his letter to Socialist Hyndman he said : "I have carefully considered the matter again and I remain of the same view as I then expressed to you that after reading your article in *Justice*, I cannot any more work with you and the S.D.F. on Indian matters. My desire and aim has been not to encourage rebellion but to prevent it and to make the British connection with India a benefit and blessing to both countries which it can certainly..."[18]

As late as 1906 when, as we shall see, Brahmin reaction had raised its ugly head, to reaffirm and reiterate the basic principles of his creed, Dadabhai exclaimed :

> "Our faith and our future are in our own hands. If we are true to ourselves and to our country and make all the necessary sacrifices for our elevation and amelioration, I for one have not the shadow of a doubt that in dealing with such justice-loving, fairminded people as the British, we may rest fully assured that we shall not work in vain. It is this conviction which has supported me against all difficulties. I have never faltered in my faith in the British character and have always believed that the time will come when the sentiments of the British nation and our gracious Sovereign, proclaimed to us in our great charter of the Proclamation of 1858, will be realized, viz., 'in their prosperity will be our strength; in their contentment our best reward."[19]

Mahadev Govind Ranade was a Brahmin with liberal views. A brilliant lawyer who was raised to the Bench, he served as an illustrious judge for many years. In social field he was a revolutionary. Indeed, though he participated in politics, as

judges were allowed to do in those good old days, he firmly believed that political freedom was not worth much if people continued to suffer from evil practices and lived on low cultural level. His emphasis was more on character-building and self-improvement than criticism of the British rulers. He was equally interested in economics and in political reform. Industrialization was to him the sheet anchor of the country's progress.

In 1887, Ranade started the Social Reform Association with the aim of focussing the people's attention on various social evils which continued to eat into the vitals of the Indian society. He opposed the marriage of girls of tender age. He was a staunch supporter of widow-remarriage and took active part in celebrating such marriages for which "sin" he was excommunicated. "Only when the Indians have regained moral excellence and uprooted all social evils can they aspire political freedom which will be real and everlasting"; this was Ranade's constant theme of speeches and discussions.

Ranade became a leading light of the Prarthana Samaj after he joined it in 1870. Though a revolutionary in spirit he was not for destruction of past Indian culture. He made a marked distinction between the positive achievements and debasing practices of the Indian society. He opposed orthodoxy and obscurantism but advocated acceptance of rational elements in Hindu culture. He said : "We do not want to break with the past and cease all connection with our society." He believed that "there was an ideal Hindu society in the old days but evils crept in during a period of depression, when, in panic and weakness, a compromise was made with the brute forces of ignorance and depression."[20] To him reform movement was the way of liberating Indian society from the evils which had grown on it. Citing some of the evils he mentioned "the dependent status of women, infant marriage, prohibition of remarriage of widows, restriction of marriage within the narrow circle of the sub-caste to which one belonged, ignorance and seclusion (purdah) of women, prohibition of foreign travel, various kinds of abstentions enforced upon women, restrictions as to interdinning among various castes, untouchability,"[21] all born after the rise of neo-Brahminism. The

general principle enunciated by Ranade was to root out those ideas and their outward forms which were responsible for the decline of the Indians after the defeat of the Great Buddhist Revolution. He was an admirer of Western civilization and new learning.

Ranade could not take as active part in politics as he would have liked because he was a judge under the Government of Bombay, yet his role in advancing the cause of Indian nationalism was enormous. He devoted himself to the economic and social uplift of the country. In 1890, he inaugurated the Industrial Association of Western India. What was of greater value, he inspired a number of intelligent and patriotic youngmen by his lofty ideals; among them was the famous parliamentarians, G.K. Gokhale.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale was born on May 9, 1866, at Katluk in Ratnagiri district.

After completing his education in Bombay he became a member of Deccan Education Society and served as a teacher in the Fergussan College. In 1888, he edited *Sudharak* and, in 1895, was appointed as editor of *Rashtra Sabha Samachar*.

From early days in his life Gokhale was secular in outlook and opposed to religious approach to public affairs. He refused to observe customary rites or fasts and opposed immoral Brahmin traditions and practices. Even his sacred thread was one day discarded by him. In a missionary function which was attened by members of all communities refreshments were served and partaken by those present. This was disallowed by rigid caste rules. Every Hindu was consequently ordered to expiate for the "sin" on pain of excommunication. The explanation ordered was giving of *dakshina* to a Brahmin priest. Though others accepted the ruling, Gokhale flatly refused to comply.

Gokhale's enthusiasm for public service received an additional vigour when he met Ranade in 1887 and accepted him as the leader. In his writings and utterances he demanded progressive constitutional government for India and greater share in the administration to suitable Indians. But in his fight he remained within the four corners of law. "His endeavour was", says his biographer, "to build his case on

facts and logic and through persuasion to bring about a change of heart in those who counted. His own faith in British ideas of justice and fair play was so firm that he was unwilling to dismiss British officials in India as beyond reclaim. It was an uphill task that he undertook but it was done tenaciously, assiduously and singlemindedly. Gokhale was an optimist of a rare kind. No ridicule could dishearten him, no temptation demoralize him, no praise weaken him."[2]

Gokhale made several trips to the United Kingdom to plead for the constitutional advance of his homeland. He went for the first time in 1897 to present his case before Welby Commission appointed to inquire into the administration and management of the military and civil expenditure in India. His capability in presenting India's case earned him encomiums in political circles in England as well as in India. But his fame as a great and successful parliamentarian rests on the work he did as a member of the Bombay Legislative Council and the Central Legislative Council where his powers of persuasion and ability to impress were recognised even by the rulers and his opponents.

Like Rammohan Roy and Dadabhai Naoroji, Gokhale also believed that the British rule had come as divine dispensation for India's good. This belief was unequivocally expressed in in the preamble to the Constitution for the Servants of India Society which he founded in 1905. The members of the Society frankly accepted the British connection as ordained. "Self-Government within the Empire for their country and a higher life generally for their countrymen is their goal. This goal they recognise cannot be attained without years of earnest and patient efforts and sacrifice worthy of the cause."[23] The Constitution of the Society laid utmost emphasis on character and capacity-building. The seven vows which a member had to take were : that the country would be always first in his thoughts; he would seek no personal advantage; regard all Indians as his brothers; would content with minimum provision for maintenance of his family; would not devote part of his energies to earning money for himself; would lead a pure personal life; would engage in no personal

quarrels; and, lastly, would always keep the aims of the society in view and would never do anything inconsistent with them.

Formation of the Servants of India Society was an event which occurred in the beginning of the twentieth century. Many developments had taken place earlier of which we need to take notice for a balanced appraisal of the British Rule, and the unfortunate turn which Indian politics took at the end of the last and the beginning of the present century.

In 1852 a petition had been drafted by Harish Mukerjee demanding a Central Legislature of 17 members which would be separate from the Governor-General's Council. The same year G.H. Deshmukh (1823-1892) advocated the setting of an Indian Parliament consisting of two representatives from each district and each city elected on a system of joint electorates without considerations of caste, creed or colour.

By the Act of 1861, for the first time under the British rule, three Indians were nominated to the Central Legislative Council. Lord Mayo (1869-72) planned to give an increasing share of responsibility to Indians in governing the country and to that end established municipal institutions to start with. He said: "We must gradually associate with ourselves in the Government of this country more of the native element. We have neglected this too much...I believe we shall find the best assistance from natives in our administration not by competitive examination or the sudden elevation of ill educated and incapable men, but by quietely entrusting as many as we can with local responsibility and instructing them in the management of their own district affairs."[24]

The time was approaching when the British power would have to be transferred and this was hinted at by the famous British liberal statesman, William Ewart Gladstone, in 1877, when he argued that, morally, it was necessary that India should be governed for the good of the Indians. "Our title to be there depends upon a first condition, that our being there is profitable to the Indian nation; and on a second condition, that we can make them see and understand it to be profitable... for unless they do, we shall not be prepared to meet an inevitable future; we shall not be able to confront the growth of the Indian mind under the very active processes of education

which we have ourselves introduced."[25] Gladstone had also made an important remark that "India should be ruled by the Indians."

The New Council Act of 1892 practically introduced elections of non-official members to the Provincial Councils, such groups as municipalities, chambers of commerce and religious communities were entitled to recommend members to fill up the majority of seats. The Act abolished official majority in the Councils which were permitted to discuss questions relating to administration and the budget. This was the first triumph of British policy as these measures brought the country nearer to the day of peaceful transference of power into responsible and experienced Indian hands by constitutional methods.

Meanwhile several associations of politically and socially conscious men cropped up in the metropolitan cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras; they were, however, parochial. The one which espoused an all-India outlook was the East Indian Association founded by Dadabhai Naoroji. It was a gathering of intellectuals and had branches in some big cities. The British rulers welcomed the formation of such a body and for many years the authorities sought the views of the Association as representing the Indian public opinion. The leaders endeavoured to secure support of the British Indian Association to strengthen their viewpoint and for nearly forty years it did valuable work. But later on it failed to meet the growing democratic tendencies and aspirations of the advance sections.

In 1877 another political organization called the Indian Association was founded; its leading light being Surendranath Banerjee (1848-1926) who had been one of the first Indians admitted to the ICS but had been dismissed on some trivial charge. Banerjee believed that the unification of the Indian races and people was possible on the basis of common political interests and aspirations. The father figure of the Association was K.M. Banerjee (1813-1885) who was a staunch admirer of Derozio. In its first meeting the Association protested against discrimination between Indian and British candidates for ICS. The age limit for the candidates had been lowered from 21 to

19 which worked, in practice, against the Indians; the Association strongly opposed it. It was also suggested that the examination for the Service should be held not only in Britain but also, simultaneously, in India. The Association held in 1885 its second meeting in Calcutta. At the same time, another All-India political body was formed which was meeting in Bombay. This was the Indian National Congress destined to play the most important role in the contemporary history of India.

The number of educated Indians was growing year after year in the seventies of the last century, their unemployment presented a problem which could no longer be ignored. Besides, they formed a class which articulated public opinion and wise statesmanship consisted in hearing them. Lord Ripon, Viceroy (1880-1884) had sincere sympathies with this class. In his view the educated Indians possessed legitimate ambitions in keeping with their education and the pledges of the British Parliament.

Ripon redressed many of the grievances publicly aired by the Indian leaders. He drafted a new Arms Act without the clauses which favoured Europeans and Eurasians. To provide outlets for political expression, he proposed reforms in local self-government. As already stated, he also called for the reforms of criminal procedure code so that Indian magistrates could try Europeans in criminal cases. He pressed for changes in the ICS to allow provincial competitive examinations with the age limit 18-23 which had been reduced to 17-19 making it difficult for Indians to sit for them.

All this was satisfying to the educated Indians and they fully cooperated with the Viceroy and appreciated the work that he was doing.

It was Ripon's great desire to help the progressive sections in forming a strong, responsible and countrywide organisation to ventilate public demands and work for achieving the ultimate national goal of self-rule. This remained unfulfilled because his term of office ended in 1884.

Ripon had however entrusted the task to another equally good Englishman, Allan Octavian Hume a member of the Indian Civil Service. Both of them believed that the growing political

consciousness could be officially nurtured to the mutual benefit of the rulers and the ruled.

Treated as a confidant by Ripon and as a colleague by prominent Indian leaders, Hume had access to the inner circles of both the worlds, official, and non-official. To bring educated Indians and the Government closer, he helped the public leaders to form an all-Indian political organization. Ripon had fathered the idea and, fortunately, when his successor, Lord Dufferin (1884-88), took over the reins of office, he too, encouraged Hume to go ahead with the scheme.

In consultation with the Indian leaders and the Viceroy, Hume had designed to make the national organization a joint body of the Indian people and the British authorities. The Viceroy was to give his blessings and the Governor of Bombay was to preside over its deliberations. But Lord Dufferin somewhat changed his view and thought it better that Indian leaders should be completely free to express their ideas and opinions. "He (Lord Dufferin) said there was nobody of persons in this country who performed the functions which Her Majesty's opposition did in England... It would be very desirable in their interests as well as the interest of the ruled that Indian politicians should meet yearly and point out to the Government in what respect the administration was defective and how it could be improved, and, he added, that an assembly such as he (Hume) proposed should not be presided over by the local governor for in his presence the people might not like to speak out their minds. Mr. Hume was convinced by Lord Dufferin's argument's and when he placed the schemes, his own and Lord Dufferin's before leading politicians in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, and other parts of the country, the latter unanimously accepted Lord Dufferin's scheme and proceeded to give effect to it."[26]

On December 28, 1885, with W.C. Banerjee in the chair, 73 delegates hailing from all over India and belonging to different faiths met in the large hall of Gokaldas Tejpal Sanskrit College in Bombay and commenced deliberations. As an outcome the Indian National Congress was born to create a new, free and democratic India.

Among the participants were renowned personalities like Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, M.G. Ranade, B.M. Malabari, V. Chariar, Badruddin Tyabji, Dinshaw Wacha, S.Subramania Iyer, P.A. Charlu, N.N. Sen, J. Ghosal, Peter Pillai, Rahimtualla Sayani and K.T. Telang. They as well as other participants, were convinced that by cooperating with the British the people of India were destined to peacefully and constitutionally attain their goal of cultural, economic and political emancipation. The attitude of the founders of the Congress towards the British may be tersely but eloquently expressed in Naorojis words : "We Indian people believed that although John Bull is a little thick-headed, once we can penetrate through his head into his brain that a certain thing is right and proper to be done, you may be quite sure that this will be done."

The Congress constituted a cohesive body. The majority of its members, proud of India's ancient heritage, were steeped in Western culture and trained in elementary democratic institutions or in free journalism; eighty per cent of them spoke English; they were determined to cut across differences of caste, religion and wealth enabling India to emerge as a nation of free men. Even the Brahmins among them were critical of Brahminism and longed to establish an egalitarian social order in India. Bharat Mata seemed to be finding her feet once again on territories firm after the downfall of Buddhism.

A band of forward-looking Englishmen enthused by the birth of the National Congress evinced sincere sympathy with the Indian aspirations and eagerly employed themselves in creating conditions in India and Britain conducive to the fulfilment of the laudable aim. Notable among these well-wishers were Alfred Webb, Henry Fawcett, John Bright. Charles Bradlaugh and William Digby who held prominent positions in British public life, and A.O. Hume, George Yule, Sir William Wedderburn, Eardley Norton, Sir Henry Cotton and Justice Jardine who were either distinguished members of the Indian Civil Service or well-established and reputable businessmen.[27] Some of the Englishmen so endeared themselves to Indian patriots as to attain the highest place in guiding the political movement of the country. George Yule was elected President

of the fourth Congress session in 1888; Wedderburn presided over its two sessions in 1889 and 1910; Alfred Webb was chosen as president in 1894; the same honour was bestowed on Henry Cotton in 1904. It signified the close cooperation that existed between Indian intellectuals and British politicians, administrators and traders to awaken the country for achievements of its liberty.

When Charles Bradlaugh, the illustrious liberal thinker of outspoken atheistic views and member of British Parliament, came to India in 1889 to attend the fifth session of the Congress, he was given a right royal reception, presented with an address and a public hall was constructed at Lahore to commemorate his friendly visit.

The Indian National Congress became, as expected, a dynamic, vigorous and powerful organisation raising the hope that the day was not far off when India would peacefully and constitutionally attain her destiny by establishing secular democratic institutions in all fields of her social life. But, alas, the Congress soon lost the spirit which its founding fathers had painstakingly fostered. A number of religious obscurantists and nationalist militants guided by the doctrines of the Gita joined it with the purpose of converting it into a weapon in the hands of those who were opposed to secularism, modern scientific culture, reason, enlightenment and progress in general.

31

Revolt of Godmen (i)

THE last three chapters are apt to give an impression to the reader that the revolutionary change effected by the Bitish rule in Indian society with the support of progressive patriots gave rise to no reaction and that it was smooth sailing all along. This is far from being a fact. "Orthodox Hindu society lies supine and motionless like a huge griffin, but any attempt to disturb it makes it raise its terrible head and to belch fire and flame through its mouth and nostrils."[1] No doubt that all sections of the people, progressive or reactionary, liberal or orthodox, educated or illiterate, were awe-struck by the firm but enlightened foreign rule, but as soon as peace was established and freedom of expression allowed diverging tendencies began to reveal themselves.

Had the British confined their activities to ruling the country and honouring its hoary institutions without interfering in the social and religious life of the people, the foreign masters would have been suffered like others before them. But as we have seen, the new rulers, so far as the administration was concerned, refused to recognise caste distinction, the holiness of the Brahmin, the inviolability of the property right and the claims of the rajahs and the nawabs to rulership even if they were inefficient, cruel or corrupt. The British rulers also vigorously put down the social evils and immoral religious practices one after another. Since everyone of these nefarious

rites, be it sati, infanticide, thuggee, human sacrifice or enforced widowhood, had its origin in the sacred word of the scriptures, their prohibition was strongly opposed. When the age-old traditions and customs of Hinduism were being systematically and remorselessly demolished, how could the devoted followers of Brahminism stay put and patiently watch the process of demolition ? At every turn the orthodox sections put a spoke in the wheel of progress to stop it moving. They exerted their energy to the utmost to defeat the British plans of introducing scientific education in India through the medium of the English language, and instead, to perpetuate ignorance, insisted on the teaching of ancient Sanskrit texts. When the inhuman practice of sati was banned, a hue and cry was raised against the Regulation and an appeal was submitted to the British monarch to revoke it, which, however, was rejected. When Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar presented a petition signed by 987 persons to the Government praying for legislation of widow remarriage, the orthodox leaders sent a counter-petition signed by 36, 763 persons against such a move.

But all such attempts of the reactionary sections proved futile because the British authority was unchallengeable and the administrators, imbued with missionary zeal, were bent upon rehumanising the dehumanised Indian society. There was also the consciousness that the opposition could not muster forces to the extent of doing any harm. In an elaborate minute, Lord William Bentinck wrote on November 8, 1829 : "So great is the want of courage and of vigour of character, and such the habitual submission of centuries that insurrection or hostile opposition to the will of the ruling power may be affirmed to be an impossible danger." As the subsequent events proved the Governor-General was mistaken in this judgement. He did not take into consideration the power of religious fanaticism which was lying hidden deep down in the minds of the Hindus and which could be aroused as soon as the opportunity for doing so was available.

Barely thirty years after Bentinck made this bold declaration, the northern and central parts of the country were deeply disturbed by an insurrection and the British administrators shaken out of their complacency.

With the far-reaching administrative, political and economic reforms the Indian society was undergoing a social revolution besides witnessing a gradual cultural advance. No wonder, the reactionary elements and age-old exploiting classes were upset. They heartily disliked the British rule which was instrumental in effecting the drastic changes. Though the down-trodden millions and also the progressive educated sections were fully satisfied, every now and then some individual or a class, section or group, deprived of power or privilege would rise in rebellion championing the cause of ancient glory, indigenous culture and the vanishing social system. In 1857, all such disgruntled elements joined hands and, attempted to overthrow the British Government. Having, by false alarms successfully instigated the Indian sepoys in the armed forces in some cantonments in northern India, the enemies of progress fought battles against the British at Meerut, Delhi, Cawnpore, Allahabad, Lucknow, Jhansi and other towns only to be routed in the end.

In the short-lived but much talked of Sepoy Mutiny, progressive and patriotic Indians took the side of the British. Dadabhai Naoroji, known as the Grand Old Man of India and thrice President of the Indian National Congress, has stated: "The people in India not only had no share in it (the Sepoy Mutiny) but were actually ready at the call of the authorities to rise and support them." Niharranjan Ray, Founder-Director of Indian Institute for Advanced Study, says: "There is evidence to prove that Muslim and Hindu feudal interests and their followers, the common men of both the communities, fought side by side in this revolt and rebellion (Sepoy Mutiny) but there is also at the same time evidence to prove that the newly educated Hindu urban middle class gentry who were striving to find their national self identity, kept themselves away, by and large, from these great upheavals. The common symbol of the last Mughal emperor, the racial hatred against the Firinghis, the religious antagonism against Christianity and the inarticulated but well perceived nostalgic attachment to the feudal past, which characterized these upheavals, do not seem to have had any appeal to the evolving English-educated, urban, professional middle class."[2]

The Sepoy Mutiny became the First War of Independence in the eyes of Hindu nationalists in the twentieth century. After independence attempts were made to justify this view but when an official history of the insurrection entitled *Eighteen Fifty Seven*, was prepared, its anthor, S.N. Sen, was forced to expose the real character of the mutiny in these words: "The English Government had imperceptibly effected a social revolution. They had removed some of the disabilities of women, they had tried to reestablish the equality of men in the eyes of the law, they had attempted to improve the lot of the peasant and the serf. The mutiny leaders would have done away with the new reforms, with the new order, and gone back to the good old days when the commoner would not expect equal justice with the noble, when the tenants were at the mercy of the *taluqdar* and when theft was punished with mutilation, in short, they wanted a counter revolution."[3]

R.C. Majumdar is thus eminently right in concluding his observations on the outbreak of 1857: "On the whole, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the so-called First National War of Independence of 1857 is neither first, nor national, nor a war of independence."[4] Significantly nationalist leaders persist in calling the mutiny by their pet name.

The suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny, however, did not see the end of the social and political reactionaries. Sporadic attempts continued to be made for the overthrow of British rule after 1857 by fanatic religious communities and anti-social groups such as Pindaris, Muslim Wahabis, Naikdas of Bombay, Kukas of the Punjab, Birasas of Chotanagpur and by individual terrorists and conspirators such as Wasdev Balwant Phadake (1845-1883). The ultimate aim in every case was to restore under the guise of armed rebellion against British power the decayed social system and religious bigotry of Brahminism which the British were progressively extirpating. But the Government succeeded with the support of the better looked after masses and the rising English educated section in putting down all disruptive forces and in pursuing its chosen path of enriching Indian culture, preparing Indians for self-

rule and the peaceful transference of power into responsible and trained Indian hands.

For over one thousand years the Hindu saints and Hindu politicians had meekly endured the atrocities of the Afghans, the Turks and the Mughals. When massacres were taking place and pyramids of human heads raised, when temples were demolished and their idols broken and the pieces made to adorn doorsteps, when holy scriptures were consigned to flames, and when an individual, however great, could lose his life with out being heard, nobody thought of utilizing the philosophy of the Gita or, for that matter, of any Brahmin scripture to fight against the barbarities of the rulers. Indeed, as stated before, the bhakti cult of the Gita was spread in order to make the people accept the misrule and maladministration as emanating from the Divine Will. There is not a single instance of any Hindu saint or Brahmin scholar having instigated a revolt of the undying, everlasting and perennial *atma* against savagery and despotic rule. Nor did the promised *avatar* appear to protect the "pious" Hindus and annihilate the "wicked" Muslims.

But now that the days of darkness were coming to an end and a progressive secular order was being built up after the extirpation of social and religious evils, the Brahmins started invoking the shastras, the Gita in particular, to incite the religius emotions of the people to shatter the new regime. The Indian masses were no doubt attached to the British because after a long spell of anarchy, confusion and callousness they were enjoying sunny days and peace. But a few decades of British rule could not have liberated them from the age-old influence of Brahminism which exercised a strangle hold over their minds. So long as the pernicious outlook persisted the danger of the people being led astray remained.

Minor differences between the two religions and the barbarities of some Muslim monarchs apart, the followers of the Vedanta did not see anything basically hostile to them in the philosophy of Islam. Both were monotheistic with the blind faith in the Almighty (call Him Allah or Ishvarwa). But the votaries of Brahminism found the secular philosophy of the British rulers to whom reason was supreme cutting at the roots

of their ancient tribal culture. Therefore, while the Muslim rule was in their eyes undoubtedly bad it was nevertheless tolerable; but the same attitude could not be adopted towards the new regime which was simply an abomination.

Even the progressive sections who appreciated the secularity and welcomed the reforms were not entirely free from religious proclivities which exposed the weakness of the Indian Renaissance. When Rammohan Roy inaugurated the Brahmo Samaj in August, 1828, two Telegu Brahmins recited Vedas in a side room screened from the view of the congregation where non-Brahmins could not be admitted. Despite his iconoclasm and inclination towards Islam and Christianity Roy lived and died a Hindu. When he went to England he took his Brahmin cook with him. The last words he spoke when he died in Bristol were *hari om*. He was, as he wished buried with his sacred thread on him. "The Raja's movement could hardly be called a movement of religious and social revolt. While claiming the right of private judgement in the interpretation of ancient scriptures, the Raja never repudiated their authority."[5]

Rammohan Roy was "a great hearted man of gigantic intellect" as Rabindranath Tagore called him and if I have referred to the other side of his character, it is only to show the loopholes in the Indian Renaissance movement started by Roy, the loopholes through which the reactionary Hindu leaders entered into it and destroyed it.

Keshab Chandra Sen (died 1884) was a firebrand leader of the Brahmo Samaj. He broke one after another the Hindu customs, causing a rift in the Brahmo community when the conservatives broke with him. But he did not have the courage to challenge the fundamental principles of Hinduism and espouse a purely rationalist philosophy. The farthest that he could go was to declare: "My creed is the science of God which lighteneth all. My gospel is love of God which saveth all. My heaven is life of God which is accessible to all. My Church is the invisible kingdom of God which is all truth, all love and all holiness." Once he adopted this attitude the line of demarcation between him and orthodox Vedantin became indistinct. In his last days Keshab was instrumental in pub-

licizing the ideas of Ramkrishna Paramahamsa (1836-1886) the famous devotee of Kali and staunch believer in the Vedanta.

Keshab was the first Indian leader to proclaim that though Britain had to offer India a good deal in terms of science and industry, India could also teach Britain in return the wisdom of the spirit. In later days this proposition became an important item of nationalist philosophy strengthening the vices, vainglory and self-deception already present in Indian character.

The source of the Hindu megalomania is also traceable to the writings of European Indologists. Having found India in a chaos and the people on a low level of morality sunk deep in social evils, no European, however sympathetic, could believe that in past age these people had scaled cultural heights. When, therefore, some adventurous scholars translated select ancient literature of India, the Europeans were taken aback and marvelled at the different schools of thought evolved by the Hindus. In their enthusiasm many of the Indologists failed to make a balanced appraisal and draw a clear line of distinction between the rationalist philosophy which illumined the mind and the vulgar theology which caused India's downfall. As we know Sanskrit literature contains both in abundance.

The Englishmen interested in the study of oriental languages formed the Asiatic Society as early as 1784. The orientalists did not evince any interest in the eradication of social evils or in spread of free thought. Indeed, H.H. Wilson (1736-1860), the leading orientalist of his time, opposed the prohibition of sati when, in 1829, Lord William Bentinck proposed legislation to ban it. He along with Ram Kamal Sen, an orthodox Hindu member of the Asiatic Society was involved in the dismissal of Derozio from the Hindu College years later.

In 1830, clashes had taken place over the East-West culture controversy between Rammohan Roy and Radha Kant Deb (1784-1868), between the Brahmo Samaj and the Dharma Sabha, which they led respectively. The British rulers divided as Anglicists and Orientalists, had also bitterly fought over the issue during the decade.

The Mughal prince Dara Shikoh (1615-1658) had translated some Upanishads into Persian. This translation was rendered in to Latin by Anquetil du Perron which introduced the scripture to European scholars. William Jones (1746-1794), a judge under the East India Company was the first orientalist to translate the Hindu laws into English. In 1838, F. Drich Rosen translated the *Rig Veda* into English. In the forties of the last century a number of orientalists like Burnouf, Rudolf Roth, Alfred Ludvind, W.W. Wilson, H. Grassman and others rendered many scriptures and other Sankrit literature into European languages. Some of the translators were no doubt critical and properly assessed the value of the book but many others went into ecstacies in praising the Brahmin philosophy and theology. Wilhelm Von Humbol said indiscriminately about the Upanishads : "It is the deepest and loftiest thing the world has to show." Schopenhauer went further and observed : "In the whole world there is no study... so beneficial and so elevating as that of the Upanishads... (they) are products of the highest wisdom... It is destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people... The study of the Upanishands has been solace of my life, it will be the solace of my death."

One can go on quoting such views from other Indological writings but it would suffice to only quote the famous German scholar, Friedrich Maximilian Mueller popularly known as Max Mueller (1823-1900) who translated in 1849-75 a number of Hindu scriptures including the *Rig-Veda*. "Carried away by his enthusiasm", says Jawaharlal Nehru, "Max Mueller declared in a lecture delivered before the University of Cambridge in 1882 : 'If we were to look over the whole world to find out the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow—in some parts a very paradise on earth, I should point to India. If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered over the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which will deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India. And if I were to ask myself from what literature we have in Europe, we who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of

Greeks and Romans, and of one Semetic race, the Jewish, may draw the corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India."[6]

Hyperbolic praises such as these lifted up the depressed spirits of the reactionary Hindus. All the criticism of pernicious rituals, rites and observance was drowned in the encomiums lavished on Brahmin theology and every evil practice born of the teachings of the scriptures began to be rationalised and justified. The hands of the reformers, both British and Indian, who worked for Indian Renaissance were weakened.

The idea of India's spiritual greatness was in fact developed by the Western scholars who inspired impressionable students in British and American universities to make it a living force. Professor Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) devoted his lifetime to spread this idea and, as we shall see, even Rabindranath Tagore was influenced by it. Thus started the worship of godmen ascetics and swamis as symbols of the spiritual greatness. First and foremost among the godmen was Paramahamsa Ramakrishna.

Gadadhar Chattopadhyay, popularly known as Paramahamsa Ramakrishna, was born in February 17, 1836, to a poor Brahmin family in village Kamarpukar in West Bengal. He had no liking for school and therefore remained almost illiterate throughout his life.

From his childhood Gadadhar suffered ailments due to certain abnormal mental conditions of a psycho-pathological nature. Any small excitement would bring about such a state in him and he would fall down senseless and have hallucinations. It seems the malady was inherited by the family as Ramshila, sister of Gadadhar's father, was also known to have occasional hysterical fits when it was declared that she was possessed by Shitala Devi. Gadadhar suffered for the first time at the age of six at the sight of a row of milk-white herons against the background of a big black cloud in the blue sky. There was another such attack when he was eleven years old and a few years later came the third attack. Like all ignorant

superstitious people village elders thought Gadadhar was under evil influence of a demon needing services of a Brahmin priest.

Unemployment and poverty drove Gadadhar to join his elder brother who functioned as a priest in the Kali temple at Dakshineshwar near Calcutta though he disliked the office because the temple was built by one Rani Rashmoni, shudra by caste. Some years later when his brother died Gadahar-assumed the sole charge of the temple premises. Then his ambition to earn a name and fame welled up in his mind and he started making efforts in this direction.

To make up for the deficiency caused by illiteracy and lack of knowledge, unbecoming of a Brahmin, Gadadhar became extremely religious in his outlook. First, he learnt the rituals associated with priestcraft from Kenaram Bhattacharya. Then he absorbed himself in the worship of the idol. He would cry, sing and dance in the temple like a mad man. Not surprisingly such activities would make him prone to frequent attacks of hysteria and senselessness. He would often have fanciful day dreams. "As I set down to meditate, I would find a Sanyasin emerging from my body with a trident in hand and directing me to concentrate my mind on God, leaving aside all other thoughts. He threatened to plunge his weapon into my body if I did not do so... Horrified (when fully awake). I would often burst into tears and pray."[7] Worship of Kali became an obsession with Gadadhar; it had a strong psychological basis.

Niranjan Dhar who has made a study of Gadadhar's psychology in some detail, says :

> "Gadadhar is known to have had extreme sex curiosities in his boyhood. For bathing he used to go to the bathing ghat of the village tank reserved for the women folk. The latter took objection. Gadadhar then hid himself behind a tree near the ghat and pried at bathing women. They complained to his mother, and took him seriously to task. This or some such occurrence might have produced a sense of guilt in the mind of Gadadhar, and it was likely to put an additional pressure upon the nervous system of the adolescent boy which had been already under heavy strain because of the pubertic change and the consequent neutral and mental reorganisation."[8]

Dealing with Gadadhar's excessive devotion to the Goddess, Dhar explains :

> "Gadadhar was a man obsessed with sex. His mother complex was but a conditional reflex developed unconsciously as a check upon the sex impulse. That is why he looked upon every woman, even his wife, Shardamoni, as his mother. It shows that in his subconscious emotional life, the conflict of impulses must have been very strong because the more fierce was the conflict more pronounced was the sublimation."[9]

Rani Rashmoni and her son-in-law, Mathura Biswas, who was in charge of the Kali Temple, must have detected sex abnormality in Gadadhar for they arranged to secure two good-looking prostitutes for him and even took him to meet girls of ill-fame at Mechchua Bazar. But he turned away in disgust."[10]

Gadadhar's mother thought of curing the illness by getting him entangled in wedlock when he was 23 years old, quite grown up and conversant with the duties and obligations of a husband. With his full consent he was married in 1859 to a girl, Shardamani (1854-1920), barely five years of age. Soon after, however, he became indifferent towards his wife who stayed for years at her father's house. "At last a crucial moment came", writes Ramakrishna's biographer, R.R. Diwakar; "she took courage in both hands and hinted to her father that she would rather go and take risks with her husband than idly suffer the separation and insults which public rumours heaped upon her and her husband. By that time (1871) she was eighteen."[4] Reaching the Kali Temple, Shardamani demanded her rights but Gadadhar refused to recognise her as his wife and naively said he saw Mother Kali in her. He would allow her to stay at Dakshineshwar provided she forgot her rights and was willing to live separately and do odd jobs of looking after odd comforts. Utterly helpless, the poor lady saw discretion in giving her consent to accept the humiliating and unbearable position as a dredge.

Hindu admirers of Paramahamsa stress that Gadadhar entertained highest regard and even respect for her. But this statement is difficult to entertain in view of Gadadhar's known views about women. "I am very much afraid of woman",

he used to say, "woman I look at one I feel as if a tigress were coming to devour me. Besides, I find that their bodies, their limbs and even their pores are very large. This makes me look upon them as she-monstresses... If a woman touches me, I feel ill, that part of my body aches as if stunned by a horned fish."[12]

Gadadhar's highest devotion to Mother Goddess and deep hatred of women were two sides of the same coin. In the former he sublimated the repressed sex urge in him and in the latter he took a revenge for humiliation to which the bathing women had subjected him by complaining to his mother.

Considering worship of Kali, however devoted and sincere, to be insufficient to earn popular recognition, Gadadhar learnt tantric practices from a woman ascetic named Yogeshwari also called Bhairavi Brahmini. Thereafter, he intensified austerities *tapas* and *sadhana* which included fasting, sleeplessness, frenzied, dancing and singing and a mechanical repetition of mantras by day and night. It added to his mental imbalance besides harming his physical health. He vomitted blood and serious fits accompanied by hallucinations became more frequent. People thought he was moonstruck and he himself believed he had become mad. The samadhi was telling upon his nerves and he realized this. "How can I explain to you what I experience in samadhi", he told a questioner. "After coming down from that state (of hysteric trance), I think sometimes, that my illness may be due to samadhi. All this is the result of my divine madness."[13]

He thought of comitting suicide with a dagger in the temple but the [mental depression brought about another hysteric fit which saved his life. Nevertheless he prodded on.

Next, Gadadhar expressed intense desire to learn Advaita Vedanta from a naked Sadhu, Totapuri, who happened to visit Dakshineshwar but the Vedantist refused to oblige him until he was initiated into the sacred order of sannyasa. "He (Gadadhar) said that he had no objection provided he could do so in private; for it would be too much for his aged mother." Totapuri agreed to it and taught him the know-

ledge of Brahman and the identity of the individual self with the Universal Self.

The hunger for popular acceptance as a saint remained still unquenched and Gadadhar was induced to practice religious rites and offer prayers in Muslim and Christian ways donning the dresses of the two communities.

By now Gadadhar had become a bundle of contradictions and inconsistencies in his beliefs, though he held steadfast to his worship of Mother Goddess. He appeared like a genuine product of Gita teachings. And his persistence began to pay.

While Gadadhar was passing through a state of acute dejection, Rani Rashmoni and Mathura Biswas intelligently guessed that his activities could serve the purpose of popularising the temple provided his fits and hallucinations could be interpreted differently as gifts of Divine Grace. When implemented, the plan, most surprisingly, proved a great success.

Soon things assumed a brighter shape. Gadadhar's hallucinations were described as comparable to the vision of Kal (time) that Sri Krishna showed Arjuna.[14] His vomitting blood was explained as opening of *sushamna nadi* as a prelude to the attainment of Nirvikalpa Samadhi in Yoga."[15]

And, lo and behold the insane Gadadhar became Paramahamsa Ramakrishna. In his own words, "at last I received the Mother's command "Remain on the threshhold of relative consciousness for the sake of humanity."[16] Religion-ridden Hindu began to flock the premises of Dakshineshwar. Even educated young men (among the Narendra Datta the future Swami Vivekananda) came to sit at the feet of the master and gain the highest wisdom.

The first to give wide publicity to the spiritual powers of Ramakrishna was the Brahmo Samajist Keshabchandra Sen. The Brahmin leaders, never negligent to lose an opportunity for spreading their cult, came forth in large numbers to raise the saint to high pedestal as an embodiment of Indian Culture. Triumphantly he said : "I am unlettered and yet educated people come here; how amazing."[17]

"Ramakrishna himself was no doubt, an honest and sincere man", concludes Niranjan Dhar. "It was the malfunctioning

of his brain as an outcome of which his entire life was replete with abnormalities. His temporary insanity was only an extreme expression to them. In his time, however, a mystery surrounded these abnormalities of a neurotic patient because of the inadequacies of medical science. Some interested people took advantage of it and imposed divinity on Gadadhar. The tragedy is that Gadadhar himself came to believe it and went beyond redemption, a neuropathological patient being hardly conscious of his real mental condition."[18]

It is remarkable that when on deathbed, suffering from cancer, Ramakrishna was repeatedly but cogently requested by his disciples, including Narendra, to use his yogic powers to cure himself and end the discomforts. He laconic though meaningful retort was: "Do you think I enjoy this suffering," a clear admission of his powerlessness. "I want to be well, but my recovery depends upon the Mother." Though being unlettered Ramakrishna could not study the Vedanta, he became its teacher and used to expound its abstruse ideas before select gatherings. He had a burning desire to be accepted as a saint and apostle of Hindu religion. He might not have succeeded in gratifying this ambition but for Keshabchandra Sen's cooperation and, more than that, the exploits and achievements of his famous disciple Narendranath Datta, known to history as Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902).

Ramakrishna was opposed to science and modernism and desired the Hindus to go to the ancient lore for the "highest wisdom," Speaking about the "greatest contribution", which the saint made "to the modern world", R.C. Majumdar writes: "Thus both by precept and example of his own life Ramakrishna brought home to an incredulous world, then under spell of natural science, the reality of spiritual life. He brought it from heaven to earth below."[19]

Ramakrishna died on August 16, 1886, of cancer after a painful and prolonged illness though he wanted to enjoy many more years of life; but the yogic powers he was supposed to possess proved unavailing in the fulfilment of his desire.

32

Revolt of Godmen (ii)

BY having consented to become a willing tool of Ramakrishna to publicise his ideas and glorify his cult, Keshabchandra Sen ended the progressive role of Brahmo Samaj and gave a fatal blow to the Ranaissance movement started by Rammohan Roy. Thereafter, the Samaj withered and practically faded out of existence. The Hindu reaction snatched the flag of leadership from the hands of the rationalist thinkers, though in politics the liberals continued to stand their ground for a few more years.

The time had arrived for the Brahmin scholars and savants to take stock of things and adjust their interpretations of the Dharma to the needs of the time. The spread of Western culture in India for many decades and the enjoyment of social and intellectual liberties by the Indians under the British rule had created similar problems for Hinduism now as for Brahminism at the time of the decline of Buddhism. The shrewd among the Hindus saw that Brahminism had no chance to survive in the old shape and adequate changes must be effected in it to make it acceptable. As pointed out by R.R. Diwakar who bewails the materialistic tendencies getting stronger under British rule; "It was this manifold challenge that had to be met. And it had to be met consistent with Vedanta and be reinterpreting it in modern terms in an understandable and convincing manner. Lost confidence had to be restored in

spirituality and in its potency as a life-giving and life-sustaining power."[1] One after the other, Hindu tapasvis (godmen ascetics) rose to accomplish this task. All of them had the one single objective of fighting aganist modern culture and of rejuvenating Brahminism, though they differed in their approach.

Mulshankar alias Dayaram, founder of the Arya Samaj, was born in Gujarat in 1824. At the age of fourteen while keeping vigil after worship in temple during *Shivratri* (Night of Shiva), he saw mice rising to the top of Shivalinga (stone idol of Shiva's phallus) and eating rice which had been placed their as offering by devotees. What was worse, he witnessed that the mice had the temerity to urinate on the holy idol. Mulshankar was disillusioned and lost faith in idol-worship. How can this lifeless God help Hindu to achieve liberation if He cannot ward off even the attacks of little creatures he thought. He broke his fast and henceforth refused to pay obeisance to any image of God. He preferred to remain celibate, left home and started a continuous search for truth.

For some time Mulshankar came in contact with Brahmo Samaj and other reformist bodies while travelling over the country and met a number of renowned persons and groups of awakened people. But no one quenched his thirst for knowledge. At last in Swami Virijananda, a blind recluse, he found a guru after his own heart.

Having studied the scriptures and arrived at certain conclusions, Mulshankar become a sanyasi assuming the name of Swami Dayananda. He discarded puranas and tantras and other Brahmin books as harmful, written by priests merely to defraud the people. He attacked idolatry and many Hindu rituals and ceremonies as encumbrances on the pure faith in God. He declared only Vedas to contain true Knowledge and revealed truth. In 1875, he founded the Arya Samaj to reform the Hindu society and purge it of social evils. The Samaj directed its attacks against idolatry, multiplicity of gods and goddesses, idea of avatar, ancestor worship, the caste system, child marriage, fatalism, doctrine of Maya and meaningless usages.

But Swami Dayananda was blindly devoted to the Vedas and intolerant of other creeds and faiths. His magnum opus,

Satyartha Prakash, is full of invectives hurled at not only orthodox Hinduism but also Islam and Christianity. He got a commentary written on scriptures which suited his interpretation of Hindu religion. Ignorant of English language, history and Western philosophy, he could not carry his iconoclastic zeal to its logical end; nor could he appreciate the rationalist and materialistic element in Hindu thought.

Swami Dayananda vigorously advocated Vedic revivalism. "Let us go back to the *Vedas*," he stressed. Whatever is not in the Vedas, he maintained, is superstition.

Dayananda did not denounce science; on the contrary, he recognised its importance. He translated the *Vedas* by a peculiar linguistic method and discovered not only the seeds of science in it but, incredibly, some of the modern inventions, or at any rate allusion to them in the ancient books. Amusingly, he quoted some Vedic hymns hinting at steam engines, railways, steam ships and other such products of modern science. But Dayananda's fanaticism did not prevent him from advocating social reform. He opposed untouchability, idolatrous practices and animal sacrifice. He would allow all castes to study the Vedas and other scriptures. He also wanted education, both eastern and western to spread which, he said, would enable India to come once again into its own. After the Swami's death a network of Dayananda Anglo-Vernacular (DAV) institutions and *gurkulas* was spread in many parts of the country for training sober scholars as well as fire-eating missionaries of Brahmin culture one of whose achievements has been to keep communal animosity aflame and to disallow frightened Muslims from settling down as loyal citizens after India attained Independence.

The most fruitful work to revive Brahminism in India during the nineteenth century was done by Narendranath Datta who had been designated by Paramahamsa Ramakrishna, during his lifetime, as his beloved spiritual heir.

Narendranath Datta was born in Calcutta on January 12, 1863. Inquistive, adventurous, ambitious and restless, he was studying in a Christian college when he met Ramakrishna for the first time to quench his thirst for knowledge about God and supernatural phenomena. Soon he fell under the

charm of the strange ascetic and became his follower. "In this birth", he has confessed, "it is that unlettered Brahmin who has brought this body of mine for ever."[2] Barely two months after the master's death, on October 19, 1886, assisted by many co-disciples, Narendranath Datta founded a math (monastery) at Baranagar, near Calcutta, to commemorate the guru's name. Some months later, on May 7, 1887, Datta took the robe of a monk by entering an order of sannyasi and assumed the name of, first Vividishananda, later on Sachchidananda and finally Vivekananda. For many years he wandered in different parts of India trying to popularize the Paramahamsa's teachings. On may 25, 1893 he sailed for U.S.A. to attend the Parliament of Religions which formed a section of the World's Fair held in Chicago jointly by top businessmen and liberal Christians.

India at the end of the nineteenth century was simmering with revolutionary ideas and stood precariously at the brink of an intellectual upheaval. Western scientific education was fast spreading; it was fostering a spirit of enquiry and creating sceptics who attached greater importance to secular ideals than to religious doctrines and it was teaching subordination of dogma to reason. Consequently humanist values were replacing the outworn and degrading myths, customs and traditions. Though earnest and impatient to spread Ramakrishna's gospel, Vivekananda failed to evoke a favourable response from the people. No wonder he felt frustrated and saw relief in escape. "I did not get to America for the Parliament of Religions", he has recorded, "but the demon of a feeling (for the people of India) was in me and within my soul. I travelled twelve years all over India, finding no way to work for our country men, that is why I went to America."[3] On June 20, 1894, writing to Maharaja of Mysore, he admitted: "After seeking help in my own country and failing to get any sympathy from the rich, I came over to this country through your Highness aid."[4]

Vivekananda had not been invited to the Parliament of Religions but J.W. Wright, Professor of Greek in the Harvard University, whom he had met by chance on board the ship and impressed as intelligent young man on way to America, intervened

on his behalf. The Professor implored the conveners of the Parliament that the Indian monk be admitted as one of those who were to represent Hindu philosophy and religion. Thus he secured admission and opportunity to address the Parliament six times on 11th, 15th,19th, 20th, and 27th September 1893.

His speeches were brief, purposeful and well thought-out. His theme was that all religions have the same goal as described in the Gita doctrine: "Whoever comes to Me, through whatever form, I reach him; all men struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me." Developing this idea, Vivekananda interpreted Hindu religion as a laudable concept of human brotherhood, its sole object being to achieve universal peace and progress of mankind. Such approach was bound to attract notice of not only scores of good-intentioned and open-minded delegates in the Parliament but also of a liberal section of the American Press.

However, Vivekananda's speeches were not without political under tones. In his 26th September address he inter alia made a complaint and mildly rebuked the Christians. "You erect churches all through India but the crying evil in the East is not religion; they have religion enough but it is bread that the suffering millions of burning India cry out for with parched throats...I came here to seek aid for my impoverished people, and I fully realized how difficult it was to get help for heathens from Christians in a Christian land."

After the dispersal of the Parliament, Vivekananda toured parts of the States, meeting people and delivering discourses to small audiences interested to hear him. He remained in America for nearly two years, went to London in September 1895 and travelled for sometime over the continent. He returned to India January 1897.

In the course of his discourses and the discussions that occasionally followed, Vivekananda did not stick to the theory that all religions were equal and had the same goal as adumbrated by him in the Parliament. He of course used to stress in the beginning of his talks that all faiths were equally truthful but as he proceeded further he was wont to affirm that Hinduism was more truthful and therefore more acceptable, than the rest.

"Unity in variety is the plan of nature", he said, "and the Hindu has recognised it. Every other religion lays down certain dogmas and tries to force the society to adopt them."[5] His preference for Vedanta was undisguised : "When the modern tremendous theories of evolution and conservation of energy and so forth are dealing deathblow to all sorts of crude theologies (of other religions), what can hold any more the allegiance of cultured humanity but the most wonderful, convincing, broadening and ennobling ideas that can be found only in the most marvellous product of the soil of man, the wonderful voice of God, the Vedanta."[6]

A man of extraordinary adventurous spirit and indomitable will, Vivekananda roamed about almost penniless in a foreign land boldly facing opposition and trying to penetrate into the hearts of a few. His discourses were not of a very high intellectual or philosophical merit. He was often inconsistent in what he said and carried little conviction to people in the West. Yet his uncommon dash and repeated assertion of Hindu beliefs in a sophisticated society brought him dividends at home. Despite fulminations of his traducers among Indian Christian missionary, Brahmo Samaj and Theosophical camps who denounced his activities abroad as political propaganda, Vivekananda caught the imagination of his countrymen."[7] For the first time, an ochre-robed monk had raised a voice in advanced countires of the West, upholding Vedic religion and bemoaning the lot of high souled though, presently enslaved, Bharatavarsha. It was by no means a small achievement and the Hindus lost no time in recognizing the services of the sannyasi-patriot. Almost overnight he became a national hero and was given a royal welcome on his return, from Colombo in Srilanka to Almorah in the Himalayas.

Vivekananda's speeches and writings have been collected and published in eight volumes. Important and valuable excerpts from his correspondence and diaries have also appeared in a book entitled *On Himself*. A close and careful study of these tomes affords an insight in aims and mission which he had undertaken to achieve.

Like other Hindu religious revivalists, Vivekananda was deeply perturbed by the growing secular ideas, ungodly beliefs and

this-worldly outlook under the impact of Western education. He realized the great danger it posed to Brahminism and Hindu way of life. "At the beginning of (19th) century", he stated, "it was almost feared that the religion was at an end. Under the tremendous sledge-hammer blows of scientific research, old superstitions were crumbling away like masses of porcelain...For a time it seemed inevitable that the surging tide of agnosticism would sweep all before it."[8] So a defender was needed to save and protect the decaying, vanishing Hindu order, and Vivekananda with his ability and determination to undertake the onerous task volunteered for the role. He shuddered to think of an Indian society without religion to guide it. "Take off religion from human society", he asseverated, "what will remain ? Nothing but a forest of brutes."[9] Consequently he gave primacy in his plan of work to revival of Hindu religion in its pristine purity of Brahminisim. "Every improvement in India requires," he declared, "first of all an upheaval in religion. Before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas, first deluge the country with spiritual ideas."[10]

The religion that Vivekananda wanted the Indians to embrace was not the universal religion of which he spoke in the Parliament of Religions but the new version of Brahminism as presented in the form of the Vedanta or in the teachings of the Gita. Laying all emphasis at his command, he asserted. "This Vedanta, the philosophy of the Upanishads, I would make bold to state, has been the first as well as the final thought on the spiritual plane that has ever been vouchsafed to man."[11] He did not entertain any doubt in his mind that the Hindus were by nature staunch followers of the Brahmin faith yet the spreading tide of materialism caused him deep concern. "Whether we are conscious of it or not, we think the Vedanta, and every Hindu does that."[12] If so, one is led to ask, what was the problem encountered by religious revivalists of the nineteenth century ? Vivekanand answers : "It seems we were going to change this theme in our national life, that we were going to exchange the backbone of our existence, as it were, that we were trying to replace a spiritual by a political (worldly) backbone. And if we could have succeeded the result would have been annihilation."[13]

While living in the free atmosphere of America and uninfluenced by the excessive adulation by superstitious, ignorant Indian multitudes to which he fell victim after return, Vivekananda felt deeply impressed by the marvellous achievements and vast potentialities of Western scientific culture. Recording his observations on November 15, 1894, he stated : "America is a grand country. It is a paradise of the poor and the women. There are almost no poor in the country and nowhere else in the world women are so free, so educated and so cultured. They are every thing in the society."[14] Having comprehensively studied the working of the Western institutions in different spheres of life, he concluded : "The American civilization is in my opinion a very great one. I find the American mind peculiarly susceptible to new ideas; nothing is rejected because it is examined on its own merits and stands or falls by these alone.[15]

Comparing Americans' solicitude for their humble brethren with the callousness of the Indians towards their low caste millions, Vivekananda grieved : "How my heart ached to think of what we think of the poor in India. They have no chance, no escape, no way to climb up—they cannot rise, try however they may. They sink lower and lower every day; they feel the blows showered upon them by a cruel society, and they do not know from where the blow comes. They have forgotten that they too were men."[16]

Not many Americans took kindly to Swami Vivekananda or to his glorification of antiquated beliefs, ante-diluvian customs and mythical episodes. Often people made fun of what he said because manifestly his ideas belonged to dark ages. In his own words "I was a much reviled preacher" and "I would not be admitted to a decent hotel."[17] But after a sojourn of over two years and hard and persistent labour, he was able to collect a number of disciples most of them persons ill-adjusted with progressive secular society, who felt fascinated by his strange dress and stranger notions. Some of them accompanied him to India and became a demonstrable proof of his successful mission abroad.

Vivekananda's was a dauntless spirit and all through his utterances runs the constant emphasis on fearlessness. He was

never tired of saying that most vices are born of fear.

Normally, therefore, on his return Vivekananda would have told the truth about the Western culture as he found it. But surrounded by thousands of backward Hindus steeped in ignorance and dazzled by enocomiums showered on him as triumphant spokesman of Hindu religion abroad, he became a different man and talked in a different language. "I was one man in America and am another man here," he revealed. "Here the whole nation is looking upon me as their authority...Here princes draw my carriage."[18]

Knowing that to the thinking sections in the West egalitarian Buddhism was more acceptable as social philosophy than the caste-ridden Hinduism, Vivekananda frequently claimed both as parts of Indian culture : "Hinduism cannot live without Buddhism, nor Buddhism without Hinduism. Then realize what the separation has shown to us, that Buddhists cannot stand without the brain and the philosophy of Brahmins, nor the Brahmin without the heart of the Buddhist. This separation between the Buddhists and the Brahmins is the cause of the downfall of India."[19] Such a statement does not correspond to the facts of history and Vivekananda knew like Shankaracharya before him that fundamentally there was little in common between the two systems and as a matter of fact they were antagonistic to each other.

He could not therefore hold on the assertion. In a lecture at the Victoria Hall, Madras, he contradicted himself : "Today it is the fashion to talk of Buddhism and Buddhistic agnosticism, especially in the South. Little do they dream (who support Buddhism) that this degradation which is with us today has been left by Buddhism."[20]

Swami Vivekananda developed Keshab Sen's thesis that India can learn material things from the West but that the West should understand that in spiritual matters India is superior and has much to offer. His slogan, therefore, was : "Up India, and conquer the world with spirituality...the world wants it, without it the world would be destroyed." In a speech in Madras he went further and declared : "Spirituality must conquer the world; slowly they (the Western nations) are finding out that what they want is spirituality to preserve them

as nations." Then came the astounding prophesy : "The whole of the Western World is perched on a volcano which may burst and go to pieces tomorrow...Now is the time to work, so that India's spiritual ideas may penetrate deep into the West." The phenomenal progress that the Western world has made during the past eight years in scientific discoveries and technological skill has falsified the prognostication of the soothsayer.

Overlooking his own recorded opinion that "the American civilization was a very great one", Vivekananda, standing on Indian soil, undermined its importance and held the "spirituality" and poverty of India as superior to Western culture. "For a complete civilization the world is waiting for the treasures to come out of India, waiting for the marvellous spiritual inheritance of the race which through decades of degradation and misery, the nation has still clutched to her breast."[21] To portray India's wretchedness and penury in bright colours against American opulence and affluence, the Swami declared : "Here is the only race where not only poverty does not mean crime, but poverty has been deified, and the beggar's garb is the garb of the highest in the land."[22] That is the proof of India's greatness and its being highly spiritual !

Vivekananda is known as a great reformer who rejuvenated Hinduism and put new life in the dead bones of Hindu society by awakening a spirit of revolt. He was no doubt opposed to some social evils like child marriage, untouchability and enforced widowhood. But far from challenging the basis of inequitous Hindu social system, he laboured consciously and indefatigably to resuscitate it. He, directly and indirectly, upheld each and every cardinal principle of Brahminism. He evinced complete faith in the beliefs of Puranic culture such as the karma theory, reincarnation of soul, plurality of gods, idol worship etc. He justified varnashrama and taught that not only the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita but also every Brahmin scripture were revealed words of God. Professing to be an advaita Vedantist, he argued endlessly for polytheism and worship of images. "In every temple if one stands by and listens, one will find the worshippers applying all the attributes to God, including omnipresence, to the images. It is not

polytheism, nor would the name henotheism explain the situation."[23]

With a smattering of scientific and philosophical knowledge which he possessed, Swami Vivekananda tried to give rational colouring to many cherished dogmas and superstitions of the Hindus : "The Hindus visiting the foreign countries take with them Ganges water and the Gita...First time when I went to the West, I also took a little of it with me, thinking it might be needed, and whenever opportunity occurred, I used to drink a few drops of it. And every time I drank in the midst of the stream of humanity, amidst that bustle of civilization, that hurry of the frenzied footsteps of millions of men and women in the West, the mind at once became calm and still, as it were."[24]

Of the ancient Brahmin lawgivers Manu is known to be harsh to women and low caste people and extremely partial to the Brahmins. Few educated Hindus with any pretension to progressive outlook, support the code drawn by the venerable sage. But Vivekananda not only applauded the *Manusmriti* but also felt exultant that the contemporary Hindu society was by and large still following the unjust laws. "If Manu came back today he would not be bewildered, and would not find himself in a foreign land," he chuckled.[25]

Yet there is no doubt that Swami Vivekananda could not get away from the rationalist traditions of Indian thought nor shake off the influence of Western culture. Whenever he was confronted with the basic irrationalism of Hindu philosophy he was compelled to accept the sovereignty of reason and thereby disown much that makes Hinduism what it is. He advised : "We should, therefore, follow reason and also sympathise with those who do not come to any sort of belief, following reason. For it is better that mankind should become atheist by following reason than blindly believe in two hundred million of gods on the authority of anybody. What we want is progress, development, realisation. No theories ever made men higher. No amount of books can help us to become purer...The glory of man is that he is a thinking being. It is the nature of man to think and therein he differs from animals. I believe in reason and follow reason having seen enough of the evils of

authority for I was born in a country where they have gone to the extreme of authority."[26] A rationalist can hardly improve upon what the Swami added : "I will abide by my reason because with all its weaknesses there is some chance of my getting at truth through it."[27]

Vivekananda insisted that the same methods of investigation as we usually apply to the sciences and knowledge about universe should be applied to religion. "If a religion is destroyed by such investigation it was nothing but a useless and unworthy superstition, the sooner it disappeared the better.[28]

However, despite these categorical statements, Swami Vivekananda did not remain consistent in his acceptance of the sovereignty of reason and make it the sole guide of human conduct. "Reason can go only a little way and then it stops," he retorted when forced to clinch the issue; "it cannot go any further; and if you try to push it, the result is helpless confusion, reason itself becomes unreasonable. Therefore, there must be some other instrument to take us beyond, and that instrument is called inspiration."[29] To the question how he could reconcile intuition or inspiration with reason, Vivekananda answered : "It is reason that develops into inspiration and therefore inspiration does not contradict reason, but fulfils it. Things which reason cannot get at are brought to light by inspiration, and they do not contradict reason.[30] In his opinion while reason was the attribute of men, godmen were guided by inspiration. Vivekananda was not oblivious of the evil (from which Hindu society has tremendously suffered throughout its history) of the spurious claims of godmen. "A fool or a semi-lunatic thinks that the confusion going on in his brain is inspiration, and he wants men to follow him. The most contradictory irrational nonsense that has been preached in the world is simply the jargon of confused lunatic brains trying to pass for the language of inspiration."[31] Nonetheless he accorded highest place to inspiration and not to reason in intellectual progress of mankind.

Where did Vivekananda finally arrrive after being tossed to and fro under the impact of diverse cultural forces of East and West ? He told the Hindus. "Become an occidental of occi-

dentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work and energy and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts." Jawaharlal Nehru thinks that the Swami wanted to "make a European society with India's religion."[32] He conceived a modern India without a modern, scientific mind which was a vain dream. If anything, his stress on supremacy of reason was only to meet the mounting criticism of Hinduism by the radical rationalists and to hoodwink the young generation of sceptics. He was, alas, successful in this endeavour. He provided many talking points to educated Hindus in support of the Brahmin theology and Vedic doctrines which orthodox savants had failed to do. He thus stabilised the Hindu society which had been shaken to its foundations by the spread of Western science and modern culture.

Apart from delivering a series of lectures on the Gita, Vivekananda frequently referred to its sayings approving every one of them. "He held out the Krishna of *Bhagavad Gita* as our national ideal of dynamic energy based on true religion."[33]

Vivekananda believed that "from the day Sri Ramakrishna was born, dates the growth of modern India and of the Golden Age."[34] If the Gupta period was the first golden prime according to Hindu historians post-Ramakrishna era has to be reckoned as the second golden age.

Most of the essential principles on which Indian nationalism has been reared during the past eighty years were originally enunciated and taught by Vivekananda. He revived Shankara's philosophy and gave fresh face-lift to Hindu religion.

He raised patriotism to a high spiritual level and enveloped it with mysticism which divested it of human attributes. "In India it is religion that forms the very core of the national heart", he said. "It is the backbone, the bedrock, the foundation upon which the national edifice has been built. Politics, power and even intellect form a secondary consideration here. Religion, therefore, is the one consideration in India." He derived satisfaction from the colossal ignorance of the people for he added : "I have been told a hundred times of the want of information there is among the masses of the Indian people; and that is true."[35]

After witnessing a glimmer of spiritual freedom for a century and half India, under the powerful personal magnetism of Vivekananda, turned its face once again against rationalist-materialist culture and started reorienting its outlook by making religion its sheet anchor of life. The Swami was soon to be followed by other godmen who fortified his archaic ideas and beliefs adding new ones of the same nature to them. As Majumdar points out: "Towards the close of the nineteenth century one could clearly distinguish a spirit of revivalism i.e. an attempt to reconstruct the Hindu society on the model of the old and the newly born Indian Nationalism was gradually assuming a decidedly Hindu character."[36]

Vivekananda founded on May 1, 1897 a new order of sannyasis, the Ramakrishna Mission, which has been doing philanthropic work by establishing schools and colleges, charitable hospitals and relief centres for starving and destitute in times of famine or some such calamity. But its main task is to keep away the Indians from rational thought and to cherish complete faith in ancient Brahmin culture. Anyone suspected of heretic thoughts or non-conformist views is not tolerated in the ranks of the Mission. Besides eightyfour *maths* and centres in India the Mission has thirtyone outside India distributed, over a dozen countries. Vivekananda died in 1902 at a very young age of 39. It is amazing how much work he did in a small period of less than 15 years.

Upon Vivekananda's heels came another religious celebrity, Swami Ram Tirth, whose aims were not different from that of the former though he founded no sect or institution of his own.

Born in 1870 to a Brahmin Gosain family in Murarivala (Punjab), Tirth Ram, as he was christened at the time of his birth, earned his M.A. degree from Christian Mission College, Lahore, where, after certain teaching assignments elsewhere, he was appointed in 1896 as lecturer in Mathematics, a subject in which he had excelled.

Deprived of parental affection in childhood, Tirth Ram had fallen under the influence of a sadhu, Bhagat Dhana Mal, who became his father-figure and preceptor. A study of the Gita stirred in Ram a romantic love for Sri Krishna and keen

desire to follow his teachings.[37] Next he was charmed by Shankaracharya Madho Tirth, who "took special pains to explain the principles of monism (*Advaita*) to Tirth Ram."[38] Self-realization, the main theme of the Vedanta, became Ram's consuming passion and chanting of the sacred syllable *OM* his habit.

From his boyhood Tirth Ram had a streak of desperateness in his mental makeup which at times made him behave strangely. Once when he had a mathematical problem to solve he took a vow that he would complete the job before sunrise and unsuccessful he would kill himself; to do so, he put a knife under his seat. The tendency to commit suicide seems to have been present throughout his short span of life.

Tirth Ram was physically weak due to prolonged pain in stomach and mentally ill which subjected him to fits. He fell unconscious for hours or had hallucinations. He longed to have the divine vision described in the Gita but did not succeed. "He decided", says his biographer, D.R. Sood, "that he would either have a vision of the spirit (*atma darshan*) or put an end to his life. Since he apparently did not attain what he had yearned for, he lept into the Ganga which was then in flood."[39] He, however, escaped drowning on the occasion.

Tirth Ram met Swami Vivekananda at Lahore in November, 1897, when the latter was touring Northern India to preach the gospel of Ramakrishna. The brief association with him fired Ram's imagination to follow in the monk's footsteps. In February 1898, he founded the short-lived Advaita Amrit Varashini Sabha, the object of which was to propagate the creed of Vedanta. As teacher, Tirth Ram prevented students from imbibing liberal ideas which falsified Hinduism and, as a consequence, tempted them to embrace Christianity. In 1901, he finally resigned the lecturership, relinquished the responsibilities of a householder and donned ochrecoloured garments of a sanyasin. From Tirth Ram he changed his name to Swami Ram Tirth. It is said that his son, Madan Mohan, cried bitterly when he saw his father in the monk's robe for the first time.[40]

Tirth Ram was married to Shiv Devi a loyal, submissive

and innocent girl who bore two sons to him. When he was obsessed by the idea of turning his back on this world and taking sanyas, he, for no fault of her, deserted the spouse on the plea that she was sick. "But Gosain Brijlal (Tirth Ram's nephew) is of the view", reveals Sood, "that there was nothing wrong with his aunt's health and that Ram arranged for her return since he had already planned to take up sanyas : he was afraid that his wife would become a hindrance in the realization of his aim. No breakdown in her health would by itself reconcile a Hindu woman to parting company with her husband."[41] The Vedantin, when later in life he recollected the parting, mournfully confessed : "How divine was the face of Brahmanand's mother. She looked transfigured that day." The poor lady did not survive the shock of desertion and died not long after.

On hearing from Raja of Tehri that a conference of religions had been organised in Japan Swami Tirth Ram set sail on August 28, to participate in it. But he had been misinformed and no such conference was held. However, with the help of one Puran Singh he delivered speeches in Tokyo on Hindu philosophy and religion to those wishing to hear him. From Japan Ram Tirth crossed over to America where he stayed for nearly two years. He was penniless but was befriended by some Americans, among them Dr. Albert Hiller, who were impressed by his carefree and gay nature and simple ways of life. Small public gatherings were arranged where he spoke elaborating the doctrines of Vedanta and self-realization. His discourses and speeches were recorded by Mrs. Pauline Witman, a young lady fascinated by his beautiful appearance and amiable behaviour.[42]

Like Vivekananda, Ram Tirth could not help appreciating the great Western culture and its superiority. After interviewing him in detail a press correspondent reported about his mission : "Primarily it is to interest Americans in his own country, with the object of helping to educate Indian youths. It is his object to bring them to American colleges where they may imbibe not only learning but also American push and independence and the spirit of American freedom; that they in turn may return to their own land and teach their

own people."[43] The Swami bewailed : "Independent thinking is looked down upon in India as a heresy, nay as the worst of crimes. Whatever comes from a dead language is sacred."[44] Nevertheless in his public speeches Ram Tirth continued to extol the excellence of Vedanta and the ancient Brahmin civilization. He also denounced Americans for their love of the filthy lucre.

It is not very well known that when Swami Ram Tirth went abroad he was not well-versed in the Hindu scriptures and had only a smattering of the Vedic literature. What he taught was the product of his discussions with savants and of his personal experience.

On return during a sojourn at Rishikesh somebody impressed upon him the need for an intensive study of the Vedas." "This study", says one of his closest associates, Puran Singh, "appeared to have benumbed Ram's gay birdlike spirit. Also as a result of it, he began to disagree with those who considered the Vedas infallible or as text-books of modern science."[45] He was disillusioned. He repented for having ill-treated his wife. "Spiritual development does not mean insensateness. In fact, the greater the development, the greater the feeling." He confided to Puran Singh that the sanyasi's robes were not the symbols of freedom. "When I next go down to the plains in a full assembly, I shall tear them to pieces." Not long afterwards he did actually discard the ochre dark-brown marino turban."[46]

Swami Ram Tirth was now labouring under heavy mental strain. He became an enigma even to his disciples. But his incomprehensible behaviour made him a mystic and all the more adorable in the eyes of his followers whose number went on increasing. Significantly, his life ended on October 17, 1906, by drowning in the Ganga near Rishikesh. Many theories were advanced by his admirers to explain the accident lending it the colour of supernatural and divine grace. But after examining all the available evidence Sood concludes : "In the face of all assertions, it is the accident theory which is likely to hold the field."[47]

Ram Tirth's philosophy contains nothing new or original : it follows the lines laid down by his predecessor Vedantins. By extensively using anecdotes, parables and fairly tales he made his discourses more lucid, eloquent and impressive. But essentially religious in nature his mission consisted in keeping away the Indians from materialistic ideas and heretic views. However, he was less interested than Vivekananda in earning fame and perpetuating his name.

Swami Ram Tirth's speeches, writings and poems were published four years after his tragic death in 1910 in eight volumes entitled *In Woods of God Realisation*. These have influenced the thinking of a considerable number of Indian youth. As in the case of Vivekananda the very fact that he addressed gatherings, no matter how small or of what intellectual calibre, in foreign lands and that some of the Americans even became his disciples, is sufficient reason in the eyes of Indians, to adore him.

The celebrated Bengali novelist and writer, Bankim Chandra Chatterji (1838-1894), flourished in the later half of the nineteenth century. He glorified the Hindu past. He was one of the two first graduates of the Calcutta University and served as a deputy magistrate till nearly the end of his life. In his works of fiction, Chatterjee represented bandit heroes who rob from a mixture of patriotic and religious motives. He was anti-Muslim and could not desist from giving expression to his hostility towards the followers of Islam. In his novel *Anand Math* (Abbey of Bliss) he stated that after the decline and destruction of Muslim rule by bands of Hindu religious fanatics. the British rule was the essential prelude to revival of Hinduism. His poem *Vandematram* (Hail to the Mother) contained in this novel became the anthem of Indian (Hindu) nationalism. Bankim became the prophet and to a large extent the ideologue of resurgent Hindu revivalism. His works profoundly influenced the young men not only in Bengal but outside the province who had turned to terrorism. "As true conservatives", says Nirad Chaudhury, "true to the established traditions of conservatism, both Chatterji and Vivekananda regarded religion as the central fact, the key-stone of human activity and achievement

and both uncompromisingly rejected the idea of purely secular state."[48] Bankim Chatterji was opposed to all social reform and justified the evils that were eating into the vitals of the Hindu society. "It is to be noted", says Dr. Majumdar, "that while Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar put forth his efforts and energy to prohibit the evil of polygamy he was opposed by men like Bankimchandra Chatterji, writer and apostle of nationalism and the author of the Vandematram hymn."[49] In his work, *Krishna Charita*, Bankim averred that Sri Krishna of the *Bhagavad Gita* was the ideal man.

By the end of the nineteenth century Hindu saints and political leaders had gained strength to stem the tide of rational thought and restore respect and devotion for Brahminism. Secular ideas, it was held, were corroding Vedic culture and hence the time had come to seek the help of the Bhagavad-Gita to meet the enemy and destroy him. A movement was launched to popularize the holy poem.

Raj Narain Bose (1826-1889), formed a body in 1861 with the grandiloquent name Glory and Stimulating National Society for the Promotion of National Sentiment. The keynote of the movement was propagation of Hindu thought and culture and assertion of Hindu hegemony. Bose had several colleagues; Nabagopal Mitra was one of them. He started many associations with the prefix "national" such as national school, national gymanasium, national paper, etc. and earned the sobriquet of "National Mitra." Another revivalist was Jyotindranath Tagore (a brother of the famous poet Rabindranath) who founded the Patriots Association in 1865 and two years later arranged an annual fair the Hindu Mela—the emphasis being on religious revival.

Ramakrishna, Dayananda, Keshabchandra Sen, Vivekananda, Ram Tirth, Bankim Chatterji and other Hindu revivalists remained aloof from active politics and either sincerely or through expediency supported British Government as beneficial for the Indian people; it was premature to denounce the popular British rule. Their only concern was to wean away the educated Hindus who were increasingly imbibing non-conformist and secular outlook and were critical of religion,

sacred rites and ancient customs and traditions. But as with the birth of the National Congress the possibility of the British transferring political power into responsible Indian hands appeared on the horizon and also the possibility that liberal and rationalist politicians might inherit the power, a new set of godmen jumped into the arena to thwart the process. India had arrived once again at the crossroads of her history.

33

Revolt of Godmen (iii)

THE founding of the Indian National Congress was a joint venture of the enlightened British administrators and secular democrats of India. It opened enormous possibilities of progress, and complete freedom of the subcontinent could be dimly visualized as its ultimate goal. If the aims of the organisation were allowed to fructify by the method conceived by its founders, Brahminism would be buried once and for all, and a new emancipated Indian nation could arise on its ashes guided by the principles of rationality, equality and liberty. But the Hindu Reaction could not look at such "dangerous" developments with equanimity. And the Reaction gained sufficient strength by the teachings of the swamis, yogis, mahatmas and pandits, all godmen, to take up cudgels and make a bid for political power.

Among the first group of militant revivalists who made a mark in political history at the close of the nineteenth century was Balgangadhar Tilak (1856-1920).

Born on July 23, 1856, in Ratnagiri, Tilak was a scion of a Chitpawan Brahmin family with its rigid adherence to Vedic rituals, observance of pauranic customs and devotion to learning. He was educated in the Deccan College. In 1879, he earned his degree in law. Next year he, in collaboration with a rationalist, G.G.Agarkar, founded the new English School in which he worked as a teacher. They also started two

journals, *Kesari* (in Marathi) and *Maharatta* (in English). To spread education far and wide in Maharashtra the Deccan Education Society was formed in 1884.

Though Tilak was aware of the formation of Indian National Congress in 1885 he joined it for the first time in 1889 when its fifth session was held in Bombay. But even before that he had fallen out with his closest colleagues, including Agarkar, because he differed from them on the content of India's freedom and the method of its achievement.

Symbolically, Tilak blazed forth in public life by vigorously opposing the law promulgated by the Government to raise the age of consent for girls to 12. Representing the obscurantist and orthodox Hindu viewpoint, he protested that a foreign government was not entitled to enforce a social reform, however direly needed. He was a fanatic in his beliefs and looked back nostalgically to the days of Brahmin domination. True to scriptural doctrines, he upheld *nagnika* marriages and supported the view that a Hindu girl should be forced to live with her husband even if the marriage was celebrated without her consent and even when she was below 12 years of age."[1] He was not at all enthusiastic about social or moral reform and would postpone all such essential work until "after freedom is won." "I do not hold that social reconstruction must be undertaken prior to political emancipation", he insisted. "I attach much greater importance to the latter. Without the power to shape our destiny, our national regeneration cannot, in my opinion, be effected and I have throughout my career tried to teach and emphasise these views."[2]

When the question of extending the privilege of Vedic rites to non-Brahmins arose in Vedokta case in 1901 he stubbornly stood for the orthodox Brahmin view.

Fight against British domination and Western liberal culture was the be-all of his existence. "Freedom from British rule was the ruling passion of Tilak's life", says N.G. Jog. "To it he devoted all his matchless gifts and abilities, all the thoughts of his working hours."[3] He was the exponent of the doctrine that England's difficulty was India's opportunity.

Tilak had no social or economic plan to raise the standard of the backward Indians. Sardonic, pugnacious and provoca-

tive in expression, he was a relentless fighter and considered any means morally justified for achievement of his aims.

Tilak believed that the inspiration which Western democratic teachings give to the Indians was essentially outlandish. He joined the Congress to capture the organisation and use it for the cause of Hindu revivalism which he vigorously espoused. To stir Hindu emotions and exploit religious sentiments and prejudices of the masses against British Rule, he introduced, in 1891, Ganpati Puja, and, in 1896, the Shivaji festival to accelerate the freedom movement. By these he was eminently successful in galvanizing the Hindu masses in Maharashtra. But it raised religious passions and proved disastrous for the growth of secular democracy in India. In his book *Indian Unrest* Sir Valentine Chirol observed : "These festivals gave occasion for theatrical performances and religious songs, in which the legends of Hindu mythology were skilfully exploited to stir up hatred of the foreigner and *malachha*, the term employed for foreigner, applied equally to Europeans and to Mohamedans—as well as to tumultuous processions only too well calculated to provoke affrays with the Mohamedans and with the police which, in turn, led to judicial proceedings that served as a fresh excuse for noisy protests and inflammatory pleadings."[4]

Tilak's political philosophy was not essentially different from that of the social reactionaries and revivalists who had spearheaded the Sepoy Mutiny or other rebellious groups formed during the decades preceding the formation of the Indian National Congress, who wanted to destroy British rule and thwart progress. In fact, Tilak planned to do methodically under the Congress what others had wanted to do stealthily and sporadically in a disorganised manner. He was in consequence confronted by the liberal progressives like G.G. Agarkar, M.G. Ranade, Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar, Pheroze Shah Mehta, G.K. Gokhale, Dadabhai Naoroji and many others who were ardent admirers of the ordered and steady progress witnessed in the nineteenth century under the British. The progressives stressed that social abuses, religious superstitions, communal animosity and mass illiteracy must be removed and not fostered to achieve real freedom.

B.R. Ambedkar explaining the philosophy of the progressives in his short treatise on Ranade says :

> "Ranade argued that there were no rights in the Hindu society, which the moral sense of man could recognise. There were privileges and disabilities, privileges for a few and disabilities for a majority. Ranade (and his colleagues) struggled to create rights. Ranade wanted to vitalize the conscience of Hindu society which had become moribund and morbid. Ranade aimed at creating a real social democracy without which there could be no sure and stable politics. The conflict was between two opposing points of view and it centred round the question which is more important for the survival of a nation, political freedom or strong moral fiber. Ranande took the view that moral stamina was more important than political freedom."[5]

Ranade repeatedly emphasised :

> "It is an idle dream to expect men to remain enchained and enshackled in their own superstitions and social evils, while they are struggling hard to win rights and privileges from their rulers."

Tilak, however, pursued his chosen course of deliberately exploiting religious sentiments, age-old superstitions and mass ignorance to rouse anti-British feelings for achievement of liberation. "Tilak's object", says R.C. Majumdar, "undoubtedly was to utilise the religious instincts and historical traditions for the purpose of engendering patriotism and national spirit among the people."[6]

Tilak spoke, wrote and acted fearlessly but with scant regard for facts or principles of morality. To him everything was fair in war against opponents be it the foreigners or his own countrymen. Early in his journalistic career he was convicted in 1882, and sentenced to four months imprisonment on charge of defamation when he published letters purported to have been written by one Barve, Diwan of Kolhapur State, which proved, in a court of law, to be forgeries. He frequently quarreled with those who disagreed with him and critics have suggested that he was incapable of working on equal terms with his colleagues. What was worse, he resorted to unbecoming ways to run down opponents. "It must be admitted,"

says his biographer,N.G. Jog, "that some times in the heat of battle Tilak transgressed the bounds of fair debate and hit below the belt."[7]

In 1897, Tilak was arrested, tried and imprisoned for a year for involvement in terrorist activities of the Chaphekar brothers who had murdered two English officials, Rand and Ayerst. The victims were on special plague duty and had taken measures to stop the epidemic from spreading. Believing, as the Hindu did, that any epidemic was a manifestation of angry goddess who should be propitiated than repulsed, the remedial measures could not have been welcomed and were opposed by orthodox sections on the plea that they wounded religious susceptibilities of the people. Tilak encouraged such attitude which unfortunately generated a climate of violence in which the two officials were assassinated. The imprisonment made Tilak a martyr in the eyes of the religion-ridden and backward Hindus of Maharashtra. He was called *Lokamanya* (Adored by the People).

After his release, undaunted as ever, Tilak vigorously championed terrorist activities and political murders. He was prosecuted for writings inciting violence and disaffection in 1908, sentenced to six years imprisonment and transported to Burma to spend the time in Mandalay Jail.

Tilak refuted the prosecution's case that he supported the cult of the bomb. But the Indian judge, Davar, who had, ironically, been his legal council in 1867 and secured bail for him, said while pronouncing his judgment:

> "It seems to me that it must be a diseased mind, a most perverted mind that could say that the articles which you have written are legitimate weapons in political agitation. They are seething with sedition; they preach violence; they speak of murder with approval. The cowardly and atrocious acts of committing murders with bombs not only seems to meet with your approval, but you hail the advent of the bomb in India as if something has come to India for good. Your hatred of the ruling class has not disappeared during these ten years...You wrote abut bombs as if they were legitimate instruments in political agitations. Such journalism is a curse to the country."[8]

Confident that reaction against modern culture in a religion-ridden society was bound to be victorious in the long run and conscious of his role in the counter-revolutionary struggle, Tilak stated before the court:

> "All I wish to say is that, in spite of the verdict of the Jury, I maintain that I am innocent. There are higher powers that rule the destiny of things and it may be the will of Providence that the cause which I represent may prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free."[9]

How a true prophet he proved to be!

Tilak was a great scholar of Sanskrit and well-versed in the ancient lore of the Hindus. He had also read, while in Mandalay prison, the Western philosophies and was fairly acquainted with the writings of Kant, Hegel, Butler, Rousseau, Voltaire, Locke, Max Mueller and Darwin. But the study only fortified his Brahmin beliefs and made no dent in his orthodoxy. He persisted in his anti-Western attitude. He combined in himself a deep knowledge of Hindu civilization with a burning ambition to revive the ancient glories of the Peshwas. It is said of him that had he lived in an earlier age he would have carved a kingdom for himself.

For the purpose of our study, however, what is important in Tilak's life is that he was a devoted admirer of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and wrote a comprehensive commentary on it entitled the *Gita Rahasya* (Secret of the Gita). He advised everyone "who wishes to become acquainted with the basic principles of the Hindu religion and morality that he should first study this wonderful and unprecedented book",[10] and he claimed that he was himself guided by it in all that he did.

It is not surprising that Tilak taught that the only way to get liberty was by perpetual agitation by any means and, in the last resort, by use of physical force. But what is significant, he did not hesitate to denounce truth if it in any way favoured the British Government. Gokhale, while in England, wrote a letter to the Press condemning the behaviour of the military authorities during the antiplague operations at Poona. He did so on getting disturbing reports from one or two of his co-workers. Subsequently, he came to know from a more

reliable authority that he was misinformed and, as a gentleman, he apologised for having sent the letter for publication. The apology was published on August 4, 1897, in the *Times of India* and the *Manchester Guardian*. On return to India he said : "I once more tender an unqualified apology to all, to H.E. the Governor, to members of the Plague Committee, and to the soldiers engaged in plague operations."[11] This was too much for Tilak. He at once accused Gokhale of being a traitor to his country, arguing that truth or falsity of the charges was irrelevant, and that in a war any weapon is permissible.[12] This clearly brings out the basic difference between the followers of the two trends in Hindu culture; the rationalist and the so-called spiritualist or the secularist and the religious.

In his untiring campaign against the British Rule and Western liberal influence, Tilak received fullest support from Lala Lajpatrai of the Punjab and Bepinchandra Pal of Bengal who were equally militant and backward-looking. Like Tilak the other two also were prosecuted and imprisoned for spreading violence and sedition in the country. They were acclaimed as martyrs for the cause of India's freedom. The trio (known as Lal-Bal-Pal) became a formidable force in Indian politics during the antipartition days.

Tilak was the first great leader who laid down the basic theories of Indian nationalism which were subsequently developed by Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) and M.K. Gandhi (1869-1948).

The introduction of Hindu ceremonies in politics by Tilak no doubt gave an impetus to the Congress movement among the Maratha masses because it stirred their deep-seated religious emotions and strong anti-foreigner prejudices. But to the same extent it succeeded in alienating the sympathies of the minorities, particularly the Muslims, for India's freedom; the non-Hindus mostly kept away from the Congress; the cancer of communalism spread in body politic.

The rise of Hindu revivalism in the post-Mutiny period had already created suspicions in Muslim mind about the future of the community. When steps were taken to prepare the people to secure a larger share of power with the ultimate aim of establishing a democratic setup in India, the Muslims did not

take kindly to it. No less bigoted than Hindus, they lagged behind in the race for progress and were trying to come abreast when the new perspective opened. As early as 1826 an English class was opened at the Calcutta Madrassa, a school for Muslims which taught Arabic and Persian; it had to be discontinued due to poor attendance. An English school opened at the capital of the Nawab of Murshidabad did not fare better. Another attempt made in 1843 by a rich Muslim merchant in this direction proved equally disappointing when out of 572 students on the rolls of the school started by him fewer than twenty were mulisms.

After the Sepoy Mutiny a farseeing and courageous leader came to the rescue of the community by guiding its destinies on sounder lines. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898) who is accepted as the genuine representative of the Muslim public opinion in the second half of the last century, opposed the Indian National Congress and its ideals from its inception.

After his retirement from Government service Syed Ahmed engaged himself in planning what he considered to be his life's mission : First to rid his community of their blind attachment to the dogmas of their irrational and puritanic attitude; secondly, to bring about an understanding between the Muslims and the British Government; and thirdly to work towards the spread of English education and Western ideas, institutions, practices and even pattern of dress and behaviour.[13] He toured England and closely studied the social life in that country. On return, in 1870, he started his public life as socio-religious reformer. He founded the urdu journal *Tehzibal Akhlaq* and produced two volumes of articles called *Khutbat-i-Ahmadiya.* His writings do not betray any trace of fanaticism or dogmatism in him. "His articles in the periodical and these two books," observes Niharranjan Ray, "show Sir Syed as a confirmed rationalist and an intelligent non-conformist. He argued, among other things, that there was nothing in the *Quran* that stood in the way of the Muslims taking to English education, Western learning, science and thought for their own advancement. Curiously enough, this brought upon him the organized wrath and opposition of the orthodox Muslim *ulemas.* He was

maligned by them as a kafir and a naturalist; he was excommunicated and threatened with assassination even."[14]

Syed Ahmed was an honest man and no less a sincere patriot than the Hindu revivalists. He believed in Hindu-Muslim unity to the extent that Muslim interests were not jeopardised by it. But he entertained genuine doubts about the future of non-Hindus if the Hindu Reaction dominated the country's politics after the British left India. Though a God-fearing Muslim himself, he was opposed to superstitious beliefs and had faith in reason in the conduct of human affairs. "Reason alone is sufficient guide", he used to say. He and his followers were called *nacheris* (naturists). Their fear was that the establishment of democratic institutions would lead to the Muslim minority being dominated and suppressed by the Hindu majority. The growth of Hindu revivalism no doubt accentuated this fear. Sir Syed founded the Anglo-Muslim College (which later developed into a university) in Aligarh in 1876 and, ten years later, the Mohammedan Educational Conference which both have played an important role in Indian history.

What seems to have frightened Syed Ahmed and his band of workers was a series of communal riots, mainly between the Hindus and the Muslims, between 1870 and 1900. Such clashes took place in 1871-72 at Bareilly and a few other places in North West Province (now called the Uttar Pradesh); at Janjira in 1877 over the question of Music near mosques; at Lahore and Karnal in 1885 where the army had to be called out; at Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Ambala and Dera Ghazi Khan in 1889; at Palakod in Salem in 1891; at several places in the district of Azamgarh; in the city of Bombay and at other places in the Presidency, at Isa Khel in the district of Mianwalli in the Panjab, all in 1893; and in the city of Calcutta in 1897. Thus the Muslim leadership had reasons to be apprehensive about the future of their community and this might have been an immediate cause of their "separatist" political and religious attitude.

There was also another reason for the Muslims to remain away from their Hindu compatriots. Like Hindu revivalists Muslim theologians also denounced the secular culture of the

West, incited violence and provoked uprising against the British rule. They yearned to restore the past Muslim glory and Islamic state in India. For their anti-British activities prominent clerics such as Maulana Ahmadulla Azimabadi, Maulvi Abdur Rahim Sadiqpuri, Maulana Fazulal Haq Khairabadi, Mufti Inayat Ahmed Kakaorwai and Mufti Mazhar Karim Daryabandi were arrested and deported for life to the Andaman Islands. A pan-Islamic movement was initiated and organized by Jamal-ud-din-Al-Afghani (1839-97) with the aim of unifying all Islamic States under a single Caliphate and of establishing a strong Muslim empire which should be able to liberate all Muslims from Western cultural, economic and political domination. The pan-Islamic movement was spreading among educated and intelligent Muslims and the thinking of Syed Ahmed and his group did not remain unaffected by it. The gulf of differences between the Hindus and the Muslim was widening.

In a speech in 1887 Syed Ahmed observed : "Now suppose that all the Englishmen were to leave India, then who would be the rulers of India ? Is it possible that under the circumstances, two nations, the Mohammedan and the Hindu, could sit on the same throne and remain equal in power ? Most certainly not. It is necessary that one of them should conquer the other and thrust it down. The hope that both could remain equal is to desire the impossible and the inconceivable."[15]

With the emergence of the Tilak school in the Congress, the prophecies of Syed Ahmed began to gain increasing credibility. The few Muslims in the Congress gradually deserted it and joining hands with the Aligarh group, decided to start a separate organization of their own. In 1890, nearly a quarter of the delegates to the Congress session were Muslims, but by 1905 the number had fallen to barely seventeen, not even five per cent of the total number. The formation of the Muslim League in 1906 was the natural consequence. In the same year a Muslim delegation headed by the Aga Khan waited upon the Viceroy, Lord Minto (1905-10), with the prayer that in the impending constitutional reforms Muslims may be granted separate representation. This was unfortunate but inevitable

in the circumstances when Hindu revivalism was speedily expanding. In his presidential address to the Second Session of the Muslim League held at Amritsar in 1908 Syed Ali Imam bewailed :

> "I cannot say what you think, but when I find the most advanced province of India put forward the sectarian cry of *Bande Matram* as the national cry, and the sectarian *Rakhibandhan* as a national observance, my heart is filled with despair and disappointment; and the suspicion that, under the cloak of nationalism, Hindu nationalism is preached in India becomes a conviction...Regard for feelings and sentiments, needs and requirements of all is the key-note to true Indian nationalism. It is more imperative where the susceptibilities of the two great communities, Hindu and Mussalmans, are involved. Unreconciled one will be as great a drag on the wheel of national progress as the other. I ask the architects of Indian nationalism, both in Calcutta and Poona, do they expect the Mussalmans of India to accept Bande Matram and the Sivaji celebrations ? The Mohammedans may be weak in anything you please, but they are not weak in cherishing their traditions of their glorious past. I pray the Congress leaders to put before the country such a programme of political advancement that does not demand the sacrifice of the feelings of the Hindu or the Mohammedan, the Parsi or the Christian."

Reviewing the Indian politics of the period, Dr. Majumdar arrives at the conclusion that "the Hindu intelligentsia cherished a definitely anti-Muslim bias from the very beginning of the nineteenth century" and "If the Muslims were communal and lacking in an all-India outlook, the Hindus were partly responsible for this."[16]

The year 1905 is a milestone in the political history of India. When the National Congress met at Benaras (now Varanasi) on December 27-30, under the presidentship of G.K. Gokhale, the split between progressive and revivalists in the organisation came in the open. The orthodox militants taking advantage of the passions roused by the partition of Bengal, (to be discussed presently) proposed boycott of the British and opposed the public reception of the Prince and Princess of Wales who were about to arrive on their Indian tour. The

contentious boycott resolution created bitterness and discord. Two years later at Surat, Tilak's followers resorted to rowdyism. With sticks in their hands they rushed to the platform to capture it and overpower opponents to carry the day. "In the general melee that followed chairs were flung and a shoe was hurled from the pandal which struck both Pherozeshah Mehta and Surendranath."[17]

The rupture was complete, and though the orthodox militants were turned out of the Congress, it started a tussle between the two groups which assumed the shape of a battle between reason and passion.

In 1915, the doors of the Congress were again thrown open for the militants to enter. Tilak by now released from Mandalay prison announced vital changes in his political philosophy on the occasion. "Before resuming political activities, he not only publicly denied ever having any intention to overthrow the British Government, but also condemned the acts of violence as retarding the cause of political progress. In May, 1915, Tilak organised a provincial Congress in Poona. He not only proposed a resolution wishing success to the Allies (in the First World War) but expressed his view that it was in the interest of India that the British should succeed as there was greater hope of Swaraj from the British."[18] Whether Tilak was sincere or expedient in making these statement noboday can tell.

The boundaries of the British Indian provinces, being the result of gradual conquest of different territories, were neither natural nor conducive to efficient administration. The Bengal province consisting of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam and parts of both Central Provinces and Madras, was unwieldy. From time to time suggestions were thrown out to partition it so that a better deal was given to the people, some of whom were entirely neglected by the authorities. It was Lord Curzon who boldly formulated a plan for consideration. There was opposition to it. After giving a patient hearing to all concerned, the Viceroy amended the plan creating a new province of East Bengal and Assam. It was duly sanctioned by the London Government in 1905.

The partition was bound to affect the prosperity of Calcutta whose industry depended on supply of raw materials from East Bengal. Though there is no reason to believe that Curzon thought of the bifurcation on communal grounds, the new province had a majority of Muslims in its population and this is what was disliked by the Hindu politicians, though they never said so openly. That the Bengali Muslims welcomed the partition because it opened prospects of progress denied to them before was ignored by the Hindus who insisted that the measure was solely motivated by an evil imperialist design. With fanatical religious zeal the agitation for the annulment of partition was launched and carried on for years. "We began to hear angry comments", records Nirad Chaudhary, "In the mouths of the elders that the Muslims were coming out quite openly in favour of partition and on the side of English...The year 1907 was a year of very bad feelings between Hindus and Muslims."[19]

In utter disregard of the Muslim feelings, the Congress politicians went ahead and incited the Hindus against both the Muslims and the British. It helped the orthodox militants to gain popularity and, in the same proportion, to overshadow rationalists who still cherished faith in communal unity and friendliness towards the British Government.

The rift in the Congress lasted eleven year until, the militants, in 1916, fully captured the organisation; the liberal rationalists had no choice but to leave finding fanaticism of the new school intolerable.

34

Revolt of Godmen (iv)

WHILE the controversy was furiously raging in the country over the issues raised in the Congress, two outstanding personalities appeared on the stage contributing to the victory of the militants : Mrs. Annie Besant (1848-1933) and Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950).

The Theosophical Society was first founded in New York on November 19, 1875, by Madame H.P. Blavatsky (1831-91) and Colonel H.S. Olcott along with others. One of its aims was to promote the study of ancient religious philosophies and sciences. It crystallized into a dogmatic belief "that all the different forms of religions were merely so many diverse expressions of one and the same fundamental truth called Ancient Wisdom." Theosophists evinced faith in the existence of unseen saints called mahatmas and Madame Blavatsky proclaimed that she was in spiritual as well as physical communication with them. The theosophists adopted many of their ideas from Brahmin scriptures. When Blavatsky and Olcott came to Bombay and declared that the mahatmas lived in the Himalayas and guided the destinies of mankind with their spiritual powers the educated but confused Hindus welcomed them with great enthusiasm.

After a chequered career in England in which she had rendered great service to the movement for the dissemination of free thought and atheism, Mrs. Annie Besant had fallen under the influence of Madame Blavatsky, the author of the

Secret Doctrine, the book which profoundly influenced the former and induced her to embrace Theosophy. Making India her adopted motherland, Annie Besant took charge of the Theosophical Society with headquarters at Adyar (Madras) and zealously worked for the spread of the young creed. In justifying the customs and superstitions of the Hindus.

She outdid even the most ardent Indologist. "Apart from revealing the past glory and greatness of the Hindus", writes R.C. Majumdar, "she offered justification even for the many customs and institutions which were generally tolerated by the educated Hindus though regarded by them as evil or superstitious and openly condemned as such. The justification of these customs and institutions by new interpretation of their significance and *raison d'etre* from the pen of a talented European lady, noted for profound learning and wisdom, naturally flattered the wounded vanity of the Hindus, the pride in their national glory being further enhanced by her dictum, repeatedly asserted, that the Hindu culture was essentially superior to the European."[1]

Mrs. Besant was a Sanskrit scholar and translated the Gita in simple English which was sold for two annas a copy. She was an orator and spoke eloquently on the greatness of Hindu philosophy and religion to big gatherings. Her reverential attitude towards Brahmin attracted numerous Hindus to her. "When Mrs. Annie Besant told them," writes her biographer, Sri Prakasha, "that India was the homeland of the invisible powers that rule the destinies of men and nations; that their (Hindus) ancient scriptures made them the teachers of the world; naturally persons, who were drawn away from their old moorings, were induced to stop and to think for these words came from a British person...She thus became a very great force at that time in crying halt to the process that was taking away the educated and therefore the most influential and powerful classes of the people not only from the outward forms of ancient days, but actually making them disdainful of these and eagerly attracted by foreign ways."[2]

In 1915 Annie Besant joined hands with Tilak and formed the Home Rule League to advocate the Indian cause for freedom. She was interned for a brief period by the British

Government and it enhanced her popularity. She was elected President of the Congress in 1917 in recognition of her services.

Besant's views on religion and philosophy were, however, strongly criticised by sober sections who thought that she was causing the perpetuation of ignorance in India. Even Swami Vivekananda, himself no small revivalist, could not digest her views. Commenting on the aims of the Theosophical Society he said that "foolish depreciation is surely vicious but fulsome praise is equally loathesome."[3]

Aurobindo Ghose was born in Calcutta on August 15, 1872. His father Dr. Krishna Dhan Ghosh was a Civil surgeon who admired Western culture and scientific thought. He detested Brahminism and contemptuously referred to Indian customs and habits. In 1871 when he returned to his homeland after earning his M.D. degree in Scotland he was asked to undergo the ritual of *prayaschitta* (purification) by the Hindu priests to wash off the sin of foreign travel. He stoutly refused to do so and preferred to sell his property at whatever cost it fetched and leave his ancestral town for good. "But his innate humanity and feeling for the suffering of others", says Aurobindo's biographer, R.R. Diwakar, "was very great and almost amounted to a religion."[4] Aurobindo's mother, Swarnalata Devi, was a weak-minded person, susperstitious and prone to hysteric fits. She was called *pagli maa* (mad mother). "Few dared to go near her as she would sometimes rush brandishing a dagger."[5]

With his uncompromising attitude and firm determination, Dr. K.D. Ghosh was solicitous that his children should remain aloof from Brahmin doctrines, imbibe the spirit of modern culture, inculcate freedom of thought and live a humanist life. Aurobindo was therefore sent to England for studies at the tender age of six. He proved an intelligent student and in due course appeared for ICS examination but failed as he could not pass the test of horse-riding which was compulsory.

Whether as a consequence of embitterment caused by the failure or something else, Aurobindo developed a hatred for the West in general and the British people in particular. In London, he joined a secret group called "Lotus and Dagger" which had as its aim to adopt any measures to end foreign rule

in India. The association was still-born but Aurobindo remained true and steadfast in the oath he had taken while joining the group.

Returning to India, in 1893, Aurobindo took employment under the Baroda Government where he rose to be the principal of the State College. During the long period of 13 years in the State he actively participated in nationalist politics taking the side of the Hindu revivalists in the Congress. Secretly he was hand in glove with terrorists and had a part in organizing a band of youthful enthusiasts who made bombs.

Under Aurobindo's guidence the Anushilan Samiti, the first terrorist organisation in Bengal, was formed in 1905. It launched a violent movement for ending British rule and banishing Western culture. The technique of the movement has been described by Dr. Karan Singh, a disciple of Aurobindo, in these words :

> "The celebrated Bhavani Mandir Scheme, written and circulated by Sri Aurobindo in 1905, also presupposed the possibility of a mass armed revolt against the British. This pamphlet shows the marked influence of Bankimchandra Chatterjee's *Anand Math* on Sri Aurobindo. The scheme envisages a temple to be erected in a secret place among the hills consecrated to the Goddess Bhavani, symbolising Mother India. In this temple would be founded a new order of Brahmacharians, young ascetics, who would be consecrated body and soul to the liberation of the Mother from the foreign yoke, and who would spearhead a national spiritual regeneration and the armed struggle for independence. Though the scheme did not materialise, it throws considerable light upon the working or Sri Aurobindo's mind."[6]

The partition of Bengal drove Aurobindo to cast off the mask of anonymity in 1906 and jump into the maelstrom of Indian politics. While at Baroda he had been composing poetry and writing articles on culture and philosophy in different periodicals. Now in Calcutta he contributed to *Jugantar*, an extremist Bengali journal started by his brother. Sometime later, in 1907 he became the editor of *Bande Matram* another such journal. On the ground that some of his writings were objectionable, he was arrested but acquitted of the charge

by Chief Presidency Magistrate. On May 5, 1908 he was again taken into custody in connection with Alipur Bomb case and kept in prison for almost a year as an undertrial prisoner but on April 13, 1909 the judge acquitted him for lack of evidence against him.

While in prison Aurobindo was allowed to have the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads for study. He found the spiritual nourishment he needed in the scriptures. "These were the only books from which I found guidance", he wrote long after.[7] "His (Lord Vishnu's) strength entered into me and I was able to do the *sadhna* of the Gita"[8] R.R. Diwakar notes : "Here (in the jail) an opportunity offered itself. He called it "Ashramvas". It led him through intensive sadhna to the very summit of God-consciousmen. He saw the mystic vision of Sri Krishna everywhere and experienced charms of ineffable unitive life... Throughout his jail life the Gita and its message had sunk into every nook and corner of his consciousness and he emerged a full fledged God-inspired man of vision who had seen God face to face and had felt his immanence in every atom of the universe."[9]

Nowithstanding this bombast there can be little doubt that the prison life had terrified Aurobindo. He tried to molify the authorities who, however, continued to suspect him of hobnobing with the terrorists. On July, 30, 1909 he issued "an open letter to his countrymen in which he virtually washed his hands of politics and said : "All great movements wait for their God-sent leader, the willing channel of His force and only when he comes, move forward triumphantly to their fulfilment...Therefore the nationalist party, the custodian of the future, must wait for the man who is to come..."[10] But this was of no avail and he consulted safety in running away from the long arm of British law and taking refuge in a French colony. "One day in February 1910", records Diwakar, "when he was in his office Ramchandra Majumdar, an employee, suddenly brought word to Aurobindo that the office was going to be raided and he himself arrested. Such rumours were neither new nor extraordinary. Although it was known that there was no warrant against him, Aurobindo, some-how on that day, heard an urgent voice which told him to go to

Chandernagore. Within ten minutes, he and two of his companions, were on boat and on their way...Motilal Roy made all arrangements for his secret stay at Chandernagore...At the end of March, Aurobindo received an inner call to proceed to Pondicherry. Soon arrangements were made for his departure. He had to take the steamer for Calcutta and did so under an assumed name, Jyotindranath Mitra."[11]

From Pondicherry Aurobindo made some attempts to guide his followers in India but the British authorities remained over alert and a search of his residence killed the surviving zest in him for politics. When years later the tempo of nationalist agitation against British rule rose to a very high pitch and C.R. Das, Rabindranath Tagore and even Mahatma Gandhi by turns requested him to return, the fear still gripped him and he declined to do so saying that the work in which he was absorbed "was so intense, of such universal significance, so integral, and so important from his point of view that he thought fit to ignore the highest importunities and to continue along the course he had adopted."[12]

In Pondicherry, Aurobindo gradually shut himself up in an ivory tower studying and evolving a philosophy of his own through Yogic practices, *sadhana* and *tapas*. He wrote voluminously on different topics and issued a journal, the *Arya*. What he taught was neither new nor original; it was a reiteration of age-old irrational Brahmin doctrines or rehash of the Gita teachings. He called it Life Divine. For nearly two decade before his death he remained totally secluded, out of touch with people and appeared only occasionally to give *darshan* to his admirers. He was, however, accessible to one person, Mrs. Paul Richard (1878-1973), called "Mother." She had met him in 1914 and came to Pondicherry in 1920. Sharing his belief in yoga she held charge of the ashram from 1926 till the last day of her life.

That Aurobindo did neither inherit the modernism of his father nor cherish the principles of Western culture was manifest from events which occurred early in his life. Though not hysteric like his mother his mind was prone to be superstitious and he started fancying things about himself before he went abroad. In Darjeeling "one night while asleep, a mass of

darkness came rapidly towards him, encircled him and entered in him. While in England this experience repeated him itself sometimes."[13] Diwakar says : "It is recorded that when he returned to India in February 1893 and landed at Apolo Bunder, Bombay, he felt as if a vast calm descended upon him, a calm which was to surround and remain with him for some months afterwards."[14] In Srinagar on Shankaracharya Hill he had the glimpse of Vacant Infinite enveloping and absorbing everything else."[15] On one occasion he felt he saw Mother Kali; on another occasion about to meet an accident he experienced some spirit surging up from within him and enveloping his body which saved his life."[16]

Aurobindo had faith in auto-writing by planchette. In 1901 he believed to have invoked the spirit of his deceased father by this method and asked him several questions. At Baroda when his brother was ill a sannyasi impressed him by crossing a knife with some mantras over a cup of water which his suffering brother, Barindra, drank and was cured. After Sri Krishna's energy entered him in prison he started hearing a voice from within which guided him in his work. All such fanciful statements and fatuous claims would certainly have provoked Dr. K.D. Ghose's derisive laughter and sarcasm, if not anger.

In 1901 when Aurobindo was twenty-nine years old and not ignorant of the rights and expectations of a woman from her husband he married Mrinalini, a beautiful girl of fourteen. She was educated in a Brahmo school and brought up in a comparatively free atmosphere. His treatment of her was anything but fair. Diwakar says : "Mrinalini Devi was destined to suffer for marrying a genius. She had rarely the opportunity of living with her husband for long...She was a high-souled woman of great devotion and piety and by her dignity made suffering itself a step towards a higher life. After his departure to Pondicherry in 1910, there was no question of his visiting her as there he plunged into even deeper yoga which called for utter seclusion and austere continuence."[17]

Mrinalini seems to have differed from Aurobindo in his outlook on life. She may have opposed his idulgence in esoteric practices and believed in enjoying life like intelligent

people of this world. She often wrote to him protesting against his indifference and ill-treatment of her. Her letters have not been published but two of the replies that Aurobindo gave to her are revealing and throw lurid light on the episode. Declaring himself to be a madman in the eyes of the people, Aurobindo wrote to her on August 30, 1905 : "It is of course, very inauspicious for a woman to be in the hands of a madman because usually a woman's mind is occupied with wordly joys and sorrows. A madman has only sorrow to give to his wife, why then talk of any joy."[18]

Defining the ideal of Indian woman, Aurobindo told his wife : "It is the man's right to choose the vocation he wants to follow and it is the woman's duty to help and encourage him."[19] Aurobindo impressed upon her that "on account of marriage your lot is cast with a madman."[20] Their difference in outlook on life has been stated by Aurobindo in a letter thus : "What, do you intend living as you are now, for all your life ? I shall have fine clothes, I shall eat nice food, I shall laugh and dance and enjoy all pleasures—this mood of your mind cannot be said to reflect the advance of your soul...Cast all this away and come with me...You are too straight forward, and that seems to be a defect in your character...Your education in a Brahmo school has been responsible for something of this defect in you"'[3] "You should always pray to Him that you will never stand in the way of your husband's course of life, his ideal and his attempts to reach God, and that instead, you will always help him and serve as his instrument."[22] On February 17, 1907 Aurobindo wrote to her. "You may misunderstand me and feel that I am neglecting you and going my own way. Kindly do not think so. So far I have sinned against you very much. It is but natural that you are very much dissatisfied with my conduct. But now I have lost my freedom. Hence forward you will have to take it that all I do is not dependent upon my volition but is entirely at the command of the Lord."[23]

In his letter of August 30, 1905 Aurobindo revealed to her : "Bhagavan (God) has sent me down to this earth for fulfilling this great mission. This great idea began to sprout

in my mind when I was hardly fourteen. It took firm root and was securely founded when I was eighteen."[24] Why did the seer then marry eleven years later and ruin the life of an innocent girl of fourteen and only half his age?

Aurobindo's Bhavani Mandir scheme, like Tilak's Ganapti festival, was calculated to transform the freedom movement into an aggressive struggle against British rule and modern Western culture conducted by religious fanatics. In communalizing Hindu outlook Aurobindo played no less an effective role than that of Tilak. In a speech on January 19, 1908 he stated : "Nationalism is a religion that has come from God : nationalism is a creed in which you shall have to live. If you are going to be a nationalist, if you are going to assent to this religion of nationalism, you must do it in a religious spirit." With Aurobindo nationalism was, as Majumdar points put, "the innermost hunger of his soul for the rebirth in him, and through men like him in the whole of India, of the ancient culture of Hindustan in its pristine purity and nobility."

Aurobindo had the teachings of the Gita as his sole guide. In his *Essay on the Gita* he says : "The Gita is a book that has worn extraordinarily well and it is almost as fresh and still in its real substance quite as new, because always renewable in experience as when it first appeared in or was written into the framework of *Mahabharata*."[25]

The philosophy of the Gita profoundly influenced the many youthful admirers of Aurobindo who hated British rule and the secular ideals fostered by that rule. In their terrorist activities they were guided by the holy poem. "It is provided by official reports that the Gita and the works of Vivekananda were very much in use by the 'terrorists' and many copies of them were seized by the police in the course of their searches.''[26]

Aurobindo's philosophy is best represented in his book *Reason and Beyond Reason* which incidentally makes manifest what he really understood as the core of the Gita doctrines. In this work he, following in the footsteps of the author of the sacred poem, starts by giving reason its due. "Reason using intelligent will for ordering the inner and the

outer life is undoubtedly the higest developed faculty of man at his present point of evolution. It is sovereign because it is the governing and the self-governing faculty in the complexities of our human existence."[26] He goes on to say : "Reason is science, it is conscious art, it is invention. It is observation, and can seize and arrange truths of fact...it is the servant and yet the master of all utilities; and it can, putting away all utilities, seek disinterestedly Truth for its own sake and by finding it reveal the whole world of possible utilities."[27]

Having acknowledged this much, Aurobindo adds rather hesitantly : "Its (Reason's) only widely acknowledged rival is faith. Religion alone has been strongly successful in its claim that reason must be silent before it or at least there are fields to which it cannot extend itself and where faith alone ought to be heard; but for a time even religion had to forego or abate its absolute pretension and to submit to the sovereignty of the intellect."[28] Proceeding further the Mahayogi uncovers his real philosophy of life : "Now, however, the thinking mind of the race has become more disposed to question itself and to ask whether existence is not too large, profound, complex and mysterious a thing to be entirely siezed and governed by the powers of the intellect. Vaguely it is felt that there is some greater godhead than the reason."[29] A little further on in the book, reason and its sovereignty are unceremoniously thrown overboard. Like Sri Krishna in the Gita who after praising Pure Reason of the Samkhya in the beginning finally plumps for the Vedanta, Aurobindo subordinates reason to religious faith. He has rejected the creation of rational society as goal of mankind. Unequivocally he asserts : "The real sovereign is another than the reasoning intelligence."[30] "The rational or intellectual man is not the last and highest ideal of manhood, nor would a rational society be the last and highest expression of the possibilities of an aggregate human life-unless indeed we give to the word, reason, a wider meaning than it now possesses and include in it the combined wisdom of all powers of knowledge, those which stand below and above the understanding the logical mind as well as this strictly rational part of our nature."[31] Which amounts to saying that

reason is a part of faith else it is valueless and misleads. "The one sovereign godhead is the soul itself which may use reason for one of its ministers, but cannot subject itself to its own intellectuality without limiting its potentialities and artificialising its conduct of existence."[32]

It is this doctrine of faith and irrationalism which Aurobindo called the Philosophy of Supermind or Life Divine. Writing to his brother Barindra K. Ghose, on April 7, 1920, he declared : "When one enters the supermind, the transition to *Ananda* is easy. Then one becomes established in the poise of infinite bliss, not merely in the *Parabrahman* who is beyond time and space, but in this body, in life, and in this terrestrial world. Existence-Consciousness-Bliss fully blossom forth and illumine this life. This effort is the central clue to my yoga system."[33]

Aurobindo, as stated above, took refuge in Pondicherry but the emotions he aroused and the forces of irrationality he unleashed in India by his writings and activities produced inevitable consequences. The aggressive Hindu revivalism made a further advance.

Clinching the issues between the two schools of Congress politicians during 1905-1916, R.C. Majumdar observes :

> "Generally speaking the arguments put forward by the moderates (Gokhale group) were rational and logical, and, on the face of it, they appeared quite unassailable. But the real standpoint of the extremists was the new creed of Nationalism which was being advocated by Aurobindo, Tilak, Lajpatrai, Bepin Chandrapal and others. They did not try to meet the individual arguments of the Moderates, but their main point was, it was time that we should come to regard politics more seriously and as part of our religion and we should approach it with that power of faith and will which neither counts obstacles nor measures time."[34]

In other words it was a triumph of passion and emotion over reason.

The learned historian is partially right in this assessment. It is true that the Moderates cherished faith in the attainment of self-government by stages while the Extremists stressed the

need for immediate achievement of *swaraj* (self government). But more important was the basic difference in the attitude of the two groups to life itself. Vaguely, both desired the emancipation of the Indian people but the nature of the emancipation in the two cases was dissimilar. The Moderates were admirers of secular culture and yearned to usher in modern scientific education and democratic institutions in India. The Extremists, on the other hand, extolled Brahmin philosophy and aspired to revive already forgotten or fast-disappearing Hindu traditions, customs, usages and ways of life. Moderates were convinced that freedom would be meaningless and ephemeral unless debasing social evils were eradicated, knowledge disseminated and national character elevated. Though they also demanded establishment of self-government but were opposed to severance of beneficial British connection; without honesty and efficiency, they held, freedom would be like a building constructed on sandy foundations. But the Extremists remained unimpressed and displayed impatience with this line of argument. The differences were basic and fundamental. To call the two groups as "moderate" and "extremist" was therefore imprecise; they should have been more accurately named as Secular Democrats and Militant Revivalist. "It is an irony of history", remarked Niharranjan Ray, "that the more aggressive and militant our nationalism proved to be, the more did it turn out to be Hindu in its religio-cultural content and spirit, at any rate from the Mid-1870's to the 1910's. Strangely enough, the so-called "Moderates" or liberals were, socially speaking, much more progressive in their social and economic thinking, much more knowledgeable and critical of British Colonial exploitation, politically speaking, much more secular and, generally, much more modern and scientific in their outlook."[35]

The new winds of Hindu revivalism which had begun to blow furiously in the beginning of the twentieth century did not leave even saner men uninfluenced. Rabindranath Tagore, (1861-1941) the great singer of Ranaissance, whose father and grandfather did a lot to spread Brahmo Samaj and who himself was a great admirer of Rammohan Roy and Western culture, became obsessed with the spiritual greatness of India. He was the first

Asian to earn the Nobel Prize for his humanist ideas graphically expressed in the *Gitanjali.* But the revivalist waves and the anti-separation agitation led him astray. "Even Tagore, a Hindu liberal if ever there was one", laments Nirad Chaudhury, "felt drawn toward the new Hinduism and his novel Gora is an exposition of this theme."[36]

The Poet Laureate of Asia, as the British Viceroy called Rabindranath Tagore, visited Japan in 1916 and China in 1924 to carry the message of revivalism to Asian countries which were gradually westernizing themselves. But he met with fierce rebuffs. In his addresses to the Japanese gatherings he repeatedly emphasised: "The lamp of ancient Greece is extinct in the land where it was first lighted...Eastern Asia has been purusing its own civilisation, which was not political but social, not predatory and mechanically efficient but spiritual and based upon all the varied and deeper relations of humanity...I hope that you will carry the light of this glorious oriental civilisation to the West."[37]

The Japanese reacted unfavourably to this. The scholar-philosopher Testsujiro Inoue representing the considered view of the Japanese intellectuals, remarked: "Tagore wants to reverse the current of civilisation. I do not want this opinion to spread. We do not accept this negative attitude of Mr. Tagore. As the people of a rising nation I think we should make every effort especially to exclude the Indian tendency toward pessimism and disspiritedness."[38]

Nor did Gurudev Tagore fare better in China. He told the Chinese scholars. "Western civilisation is simply interested in material things and has many defects in its spiritual life... On the other hand Eastern civilisation is the soundest and the most healthy civilisation and has often enabled us Eastern peoples to achieve great things."[39] To this he got a fierce retort. He was accused of being "altogether out of date in modern age." At an educational institute at Hankow, youngmen shouted: "Go back, slave from a lost country: we don't want (your) philosophy; we want materialism."[40]

While the revivalist storm was sweeping over India and carrying everything that came in its way, the British messengers of modern civilisation felt puzzled and scared not knowing

what to do and how to face the new situation. Even long before this they had lost the earnestness and enthusiasm for their mission of uplifting India from the mire of social degradation and cultural backwardness. But now they saw that a great crisis had descended upon them which was bound to try their patience to the utmost. Alas, they failed to rise to the occasion.

It was the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 which had made the British to lose much of their interest in India's social progress. The uprising harmed the country even in its defeat. For, though the British crushed the insurrectionary elements wherever they made their appearance, the fire for reform which characterized their administration in the pre-Mutiny era was extinguished in the hearts of the rulers. No longer were they in a mood to effect changes. They had burned their fingers and were disinclined to go in for further experiments. They had been severly castigated for their reformist zeal at home and vigorously opposed by ungrateful people in India. It was a thankless task indeed.

If till 1857 it were the liberals and the progressives who had the upper hand in the administration, thereafter it were the no-changers who came to rule the roost. The main aim of the new policy was clearly stated in Queen Victoria's Proclamation made in November 1858 after the complete suppression of the mutineers. In an unambiguous terms the Empress assured the people of India that there would be no interference in the ways of their social and religious life and that the Crown authorities in India would "abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of subjects on pain of our highest displeasure." In rather apologetic terms Her Majesty added : "we disclaim alike the right and desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects." The native princes were solemnly assured that the British desire "no extension of our present territorial possessions" and "we shall respect the right, dignity and honour of native princes as our own." To the landlords and the taluqdars, Queen Victoria gave this pledge : "We know and respect the feelings of attachment with which the natives of India regard the land inherited by them from their ancestors and we desire to protect them in all rights

connected therewith, subject to the equitable demands of the state; and we will see that, generally in framing and administering the law, due regard will be paid to the ancient rights, usages and customs of India."[41]

The Royal Proclamation had put a brake on the social and moral reform movement. It was an unhappy step that was taken by the British and an unfortunate thing that had happened. Had the Mutiny not intervened, it is likely that Indian Renaissance would have achieved maturity by the end of the nineteenth century; the last remnants of feudalism in the country would have been destroyed and along with it irrational thinking of the people. With meticulous care the British administrators in the post-Mutiny period endeavoured to preserve the ancient institutions, customs and traditions, however harmful they might have been for the healthy growth of a free and democratic society.

The worst result of the change in the British policy was witnessed in the domain of thought. The mental revolution which was about to set in as a direct outcome of the drastic reforms effected by the earlier British rulers, received a setback. India relapsed into her traditional ways of thinking; non-conformist views which had begun to be looked upon with admiration were discredited; exhibition of liberal tendencies was disapproved and reaction which had been temporarily discouraged swayed the country. Such personalities, organisations and institutions sprang up which glorified revivalism, irrationalism and authoritarianism. When a Ripon or a Dufferin expressed sympathy with progressive forces, he did not receive any encouragement and had to be cautious; most of the Viceroys were indifferent and carried on perfunctorily the administration of the subcontinent without bothering about the intellectual or moral condition of the people.

As an unexpected exception the British Government deputed Lord Curzon as Viceroy in 1898. He was cut in the reformist frame and, as already stated, he overhauled the administration and revived the memories of the pre-mutiny days. He was a genius but an imperialist of the paternalistic school. He rightly diagnosed the disease from which India was suffering. He

disliked Hindu revivalism and was determined not to give any quarter to it. If the British Government, he thought, is sympathetic to the underdog and removes public grievances besides rapidly developing the country economically, the demogogic leadership would not be able to incite the people. Referring to the extremist Congress leaders, he asserted : "I am an imperialist and imperialism is fatal to all their hopes. I hold the scales with exasperatingly even hand, but this is the last thing they desire....I have had a period of peace, and this deprives them of their most fertile source of grumbling."[42]

When the Indian leaders were defending the hereditary rights of the native princes and denouncing the British rule for depriving them of their privileges, Lord Curzon went about the subcontinent telling the autocrats to realize the gravity of their responsibilities. He warned them that if they attempted to remain aloof from the stream of progress and enlightenment which was running under the British rule, they might be swept aside. At a glittering assembly of the princes in Gwalior, he said in his characteristic way that a prince must justify and not abuse the authority committed to him. "He must learn that his revenues are not secured to him for his own personal satisfaction but for the good of his subjects; that his internal administration is only exempt from correction in proportion as it is honest; and that his 'gaddi' is not intended to be a divan of indulgence but the stern seat of duty. His figure should not be merely known on the polo ground or on the race-course or in the European hotel. These may be his relaxations but his real work, his princely duty, lies among his own people. By this standard shall I, at any rate, judge him...By this test will he, in the long run, as a political institution survive or perish."[43]

Liberal otherwise in his outlook, Curzon believed that constitutional reforms in India were premature, and if introduced, might benefit power-hungry agitators but could not promote the good of the poverty-stricken masses. He honestly believed that the best interest of the Indian toiling, teeming millions lay in having enlightened British rule. In his address at the Delhi Durbar, drawing a picture of prosperous India, he remarked : "Under no other conditions can this future be

realised than the unchallenged supremacy of the paramount power, and under no other controlling authority is it capable of being maintained than that of the British Crown."[44] Curzon was thus echoing the views of Rammohan Roy who told Victor Jacquemont that "conquest is very rarely an evil when the conquering people are more civilised than the conquered because the former bring to the latter the benefits of civilisation. India requires many more years of English domination so that she may not have many things to lose while she is reclaiming her political independence."[45]

Curzon had done, as elaborated earlier, remarkable work. For years he "enjoyed considerable popularity amongst educated Indians. They admired his independence of outlook; they liked the vigour which he infused into Government activities and they appreciated the courage with which he insisted upon full investigation of cases in which British soldiers and civilians were alleged to have caused deaths of Indians."[46] The Congress adopted a resolution in its 1902 session praising the Viceroy. But Curzon's forthright criticism of the vaunted honesty and efficiency of the revivalist leaders irked them. The management of private colleges had become notorious for inefficiency and dishonesty. With the intention of checking the politicians' influence, the Viceroy curtailed the powers of the universities and Calcutta Corporation. In his convocation address at the Calcutta University in 1905 he made an indiscreet remark that "truth was a Western conception" whereas in the East "craftiness and diplomatic guile have always been held in much repute." He was impressing upon the leaders "not to fight phantoms but the country's real enemies—backwardness and antiquated social prescriptions."

Curzon was determined to defeat revivalist and anti-British elements in the body politic which were just raising their ugly head in his time, but he made a blunder by believing that the entire Congress organisation was composed of such elements; he failed to draw a line between the secular progressives and militant revivalists; he tarred every Indian politician with the same brush. His blow was directed against all politically-conscious groups.

On November 18, 1900, he wrote to the Secretary of State: "My one belief is that the Congress is tottering to a fall and one of my greatest ambitions while in India is to assist it to a peaceful demise."[47] This was no vain boast.

Had Curzon continued to be the head of the administration for the full second term granted him by the British Cabinet in 1903, there is reason to believe that he would have brought home to the Bengali Hindus that the partition instead of harming their interests would prove conducive to national growth and for good of the people living in West as well as East Bengal. But, unfortunately, Curzon was compelled to relinquish the Viceroyalty when acute differences over the existence of the Army Member in his Council cropped up between him and Lord Kitchner, the Commander-in-Chief, who was encouraged in his views (later accepted to be wrong in principle) by some members of the British Cabinet.

Ironically, in 1947, when India achieved independence and the subcontinent was divided on a religious basis into Bharat and Pakistan while the Bengali Muslims wanted to maintain the unity of Bengal, it were the Hindus who, forgetting, their logic of 1905-11, got the mother province partitioned. Commenting on it, Nirad Chaudhury, himself hailing from East Bengal, says: "The same class of Hindu Bengalis who opposed Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal have now themselves brought about a second partition of their country, a good illustration perhaps of the inconsistency which is inseparable from the method of arriving at political decisions by the assertion of collective whim...there is nothing he (Hindu Bengali) cares for more than his reputation for a superlative cleverness which, he thinks, makes everybody else look a blinking fool by his side."[48]

Lord Curzon left India in 1905, and with him ended the golden epoch of Indian history. "Curzon's was a vision of startling modernity, and one which today underlines the whole philosophy of economic planning in the underdeveloped countries of the world."[49] All those who followed him as Viceroy right upto the day of India's independence were men of mediocre intelligence and incapable of handling the Indian problem which had become acute after the defeat of secular

democratic forces at the hands of militant revivalists. Not being able to understand and appreciate the real issue, the tremendous energy generated by Hindu fanaticism frightened the Viceroys and made them on the one hand ruthless, cruel and vindictive, and, on the other, ready to appease the revivalists. They lacked imagination, vision and sympathy for and confidence in the Indians; worst of all, they lost the initiative. At best some of the twentieth century Viceroys "may be compared to very experienced old foxes, who from time to time add to the fox tribe's record of neat dodges in its eternally losing contest with the tribe of hounds. But they were not the grand animals to scatter the pack with a roar and a rush. Not for a single moment between 1905 and 1945 did the British Government in India succeed in wresting the initiative from the nationalists, although at quite a number of junctures that could easily have been done."[50]

Thus was afforded the needed opportunity to Hindu Reaction to advance from one stage to another and trample upon the progressive revolutionary forces which had risen in India under the impact of Western culture for over a century.

The first indication of the terrified British mind was given when yielding to the Hindu agitation the partition was revoked by the British Government in 1911, six years after Curzon's resignation, and the two parts of Bengal were again formed into a single unit. A new era had begun, an era of fanaticism and turmoil; the age of reason and argument, of cooperation and friendliness, had come to a close.

35

Triumph of Hindu Nationalism (*i*)

THE tug-of-war between the secular democrats and the militant revivalists lasted for many years until the former were vanquished in 1916-17 and the latter secured full control of the Indian National Congress. Such a fate could have been foreseen as early as 1897 when Tilak's imprisonment roused the anti-British passions of the people and befogged their sense of reasoning. During the period of the tussle, the democrats looked up to the British authority and made one proposal after another to meet the situation and restore faith and trust of the people in the good intentions of the Government. Secretary of State, John Morley, realized it when he wrote to Lord Minto, the Viceroy, that "it would be height of political folly for us at this time to refuse to do all we can to rally the Moderates to the cause of Government simply because the policy will not satisfy the Extremists." Nevertheless, timidity paralysed the British Government and nothing was done in time to strengthen the secular democrats. The announcement of Minto-Morely reforms came in 1908 when the revivalists had gained much ground to the detriment of the democratic movement. In dismay, Gokhale remarked : "Reforms delayed lost half their value and all their grace."[1]

Many years later in 1944 the last but one Viceroy Lord A.P. Wavell (1943-47), wrote in his diary : "I feel that the cause of India's political troubles may be our failure in the past to make more of the liberals and to take them into confidence and give them responsibility many years ago, with the result that they mistrusted our sincerity and honesty, and the leadership passed into irresponsible unpractical hands."[2] But the British were so scared after 1905 by the rising storm of reaction that they did not pay any serious attention to the timely warnings of the liberals. "The British might have responded to them", says Michael Edwardes, "and if they had, the history of India in the twentieth century would have been different. But they did not."[3]

When the frightened rulers arrested Tilak a second time in 1907 and sentenced him to six years imprisonment, political conditions worsened and the progressives were engulfed by frustration and rendered completely ineffective. But with amazing fortitude they continued to adhere to their political philosophy. In his presidential address to the 1915 Congress S.P. Sinha declared :

> "Even if the English nation were willing to make us an immediate free gift of full self-government and those who differ most from the Congress are the first to deny the existence of such willingness, I take leave to doubt whether the boon would be worth having as such, for it is a common place of politics, that nations, like individuals, must grow into freedom, and nothing is no baneful in political institutions as their pre-maturity; nor must we forget that India free can never be ancient India restored."[4]

Whether the secular domocrats, in any case, would have been able to stand their ground and carry the day is difficult to say. In the emotional excitement generated by the Hindu revivalism and the stupidity of the British the liberal ideas appeared not only jejune and futile but also treacherous. Unfortunately the intellectual giants like Pherozeshah Mehta, Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade and G.K. Gokhale passed away one after another leaving the field clear in 1917 for the revivalists who then easily captured the Congress organisation.

The liberals who succeeded these stalwarts were nincompoops who became in the twenties and the thirties unashamed camp-followers of Gandhi and his disciples. "Today the relations of the Liberal Party to the Congress", lamented Dr. Ambedkar in 1943 "is that of a dog to his master. Occasionally the dog barks at his master but for the most part of his life he is content to follow him. What is the Liberal Party if not the tail of the Congress ? Many are asking why do not the Liberals merge into Congress—so useless had their existence become."[5]

With the acceptance of the Brahmin culture and political ideals of the militants, the character of Indian struggle for freedom changed beyond recognition. The cherished values of the long line of patriots from Rammohan Roy to G.K. Gokhale were thrown overboard and in their place were brought into vogue doctrines of caste-ridden and decadent Hinduism. Superstitions were no longer considered as evils, neither ignorance a reproach nor prejudice a hurdle in the path of progress. Reason yielded place to blind faith and belief in supernatural and cultural backwardness were extrolled as spiritual bliss, a gift with which no race other than the Indian on earth was endowed. In fact, the militant revivalists claimed that India even in her subjugation was superior to all, had a message for the world and a mission to rescue Western nations from the wretched plight into which they had been thrown by science and modern civilization.

Under the changed intellectual climate, the British were painted as villains who harboured evil designs towards India and wanted to retain by hook or by crook the country under their everlasting domination. The good work done by the British administrators for over a century was forgotten and some intemperate utterances or misdeeds of a new officials repeatedly emphasised to justify the new political theory. Chauvinism and aggressiveness were glorified as true virtues befitting the sons of Mother India. Shivaji and Rana Pratap were raised to the pedestal of national heroes. No wonder that murderers of innocent Englishmen we praised as sincerest patriots and bravest fighters for freedom. No wonder also that the Sepoy Mutiny came to be recognized as the First War of

Indian Independence. "Our cultural movement began", says Nirad Chaudhury "in the early part of nineteenth century and reached its apogee in about one hundred years. Then it began to break up. If I were asked to specify when the signs of decay made their first appearance I should say in the years 1916 and 1917. After the end of the First World War, and in the years immediately following, the change had become clearly perceptible."[6]

A little further on Chaudhury says that he was inclined to call the years of militant nationalism as the years of decadence, and adds : "What I am speaking about is true decadence, for during these years everything about us was decaying, literally everything from our spiritual and moral ideals to our material culture, and nothing really live or organic arose to take their place."[7]

Meanwhile the British Government had evolved a dual policy to deal with the revivalist forces and to tackle the situation. No longer confident of themselves or their mission and upset by the surging waves of anti-British feelings, the administrators started on the one hand resorting to suppression of mass movement by brute force and on the other preparing India for self-government and introducing constitutional reforms to that end. The unintelligent enforcement of the dual policy, however, helped further to strengthen the revivalist movement because the people were easily led to believe that the constitutional reforms were the direct fruit of the sufferings of the persecuted and imprisoned revivalist leaders. It was as if Indian history was inevitably and inexorably marching towards a tragic end. The rulers, however, tried to put a heroic and generous interpretation on their own inconsistent behaviour. In 1906, the Viceroy, Lord Minto (1905-10), in a letter to the Secretary of State, Morley, observed : "I hate the argument that to refuse to sanction what we know to be wrong is a surrender to agitation and an indication of weakness. It is far weaker to my mind to persist in a wrong course for fear of being thought weak." Morley was equally emphatic in his views. Referring to sentences given to revivalist agitators he said in a letter dated July 14, 1908, to the Viceroy : "I cannot on any terms whatever consent to defend such monstrous things.

I do, therefore, urgently solicit your attention to these wrongs and follies. We must keep order, but excess of severity is not the path to order. On the other hand it is the path to the bomb."[8]

In 1909 the British Government adopted the Indian Councils Act introducing far-reaching reforms giving Indians wider powers and a larger voice in the administration of the country.

Indians had already been appointed to the Viceroy's Council and to the Secretary of State's Council in London. Now the provincial executive councils were also thrown open for them. The Imperial Legislative Council was enlarged from twenty-five to sixty members, of whom twenty-seven were elected. The Viceroy still presided over the Council but members were allowed to ask supplementary questions and participate in discussion on the annual budget. Similar changes were made in provincial councils. There were two innovations : Direct election for non-official seats and separate or communal representation for Muslims. Forgetting that they were also responsible for creating the cleavage between the Hindus and the Muslims. the militant revivalists opposed communal electorate and regarded the Act "as mere shadow without substance." The secular democrats, however, hailed it with unbounded jubilation. Taken as a whole, the Indian Councils Act was undoubtedly a step towards representative and responsible government.

When a decade later, Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy (1916-21), and Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State, made a joint report recommending further constitutional reforms, the British Government prepared on its basis the Government of India Bill which was passed into an Act on December 23, 1916, establishing a dyarchical system of government.

The Viceroy's Executive Council now had six members of whom three were Indians. At the centre the official majority was abolished. There were one hundred and six elected and forty nominated members in the Central Legislative Assembly. An upper house called the Council of State with sixty-one members and unofficial majority was set up for the first time. There was no other change in the Central structure. But in

the provinces the position was very different. Here "dyarchy" or double government was introduced by the Act. The provincial executives were divided into two : nominated members responsible to the Governor and the popular ministers responsible to the new legislative councils with elected majorities. The former administered what came to be known as "reserved subjects" and the latter "transferred subjects." The reserved subjects covered land revenue, justice, law and order, irrigation etc and the transferred subjects were local self-govern ment, education, health, agriculture, public works and co-operative societies. The Governor was expected to harmonize the work of the two groups. The provincial councils were largely enlarged and not less than seventy-five per cent of their members had to be non-official. All the provinces now had full governors and executive councils.

While the Government of India Bill was on the anvil two vital statements were made which indicated that the British rule was nearing the fulfilment of its mission, and India was on the threshold of freedom. Edwin Montagu observed on July 12, 1917, that the Government of India is "too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too anti-diluvian to be of any use for the modern purpose we have in view." Thirty-nine days later on August 20, 1917, as Secretary of State he made a momentous pronouncement in the House of Commons : "The policy of his Majesty's Government, with which the Government of India is in complete accord, is that of the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration, and the gradual development of self-govering institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire. They have decided that substantial step should be taken in his direction as soon as possible."

One regrets that this declaration was not made in response to the call of the secular democrats a decade or so earlier when it should have probably changed the course of Indian history by taking the wind out of revivalist sails and buttressed the forces of progress. Nevertheless, the democrats welcomed the 1919 Government of India Act, as "a first, definite and substantial step towards progressive realisation of responsible government"

but the militants true to their policy of non-cooperation rejected it as "inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing."

India's independence from British domination was now a matter of time which could be counted not in decades but in years. As Percival Spear remarks: "the new arrangements were clearly transitional; they looked forward towards the extension of democratic rights: towards full self-government on the responsible parliamentary model. There could certainly be no going back, the only conceivable change would be to go forward. Between the views of the many who said that too much or two little had been given, or that the reforms were a disaster or a farce, the fact remains that India had been set on a new path and that a beginning had been made with the transfer of power."[9] But to the Hindu revivalists the more vital issue was still there: the rational spirit and the modern culture fostered by the British which posed a danger to Brahmin civilisation. That spirit had to be smothered and that culture eradicated along with the British rule. It was a tougher task much more arduous than to end foreign domination. It required a more talented and shrewd leader than Tilak or Aurobindo to accomplish it. In 1918, he appeared on the scene and jumped into the arena.

Within a year of his joining the Indian political movement, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi pushed all the Hindu leaders into background and dominated the Indian National Congress, becoming virtually its dictator.

India in the beginning of the twentieth century was in the same state as in the early centuries of the Christian era when Buddhism was decling and neo-Brahminism raising its head. It will be recalled that it was the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna known as the Gita which sealed the fate of surviving revolutionary forces and brought about the final downfall of Buddhism. In the contemporary age, though Tilak and Aurobindo had shaken the faith of the people in Western scientific culture, the work of shattering and burying it remained. This was taken up by M.K. Gandhi in collaboration with Jawaharlal Nehru who may appropriately be called the modern Sri Krishna and Arjuna respectively.

Gandhi belonged to an orthodox bania family of Kathiawar.

He matriculated from the local school and went to London for further study where he was called to the bar. Before he went abroad his pious mother made him take some religious vows which he dutifully fulfilled; and that gave the direction to his future life.

Gandhi's early years spent in South Africa as a practising lawyer. Happening to join public life there he developed the tactics of utilizing religious sentiments for fighting political battles which he was to employ latter very successfully and disastrously—in the Indian struggle for freedom. Simple in his habits, with indomitable will, able to influence co-workers, a good judge of people's character, afraid of none and, above all, intelligent to understand the core of a problem, Gandhi came into prominence at the turn of the century while still in South Africa where he fought to secure a place in the sun for Indians who were treated as less than human beings by the European settlers.

The weapons of revivalist warfare had already been forged by Gandhi's predecessors : boycott of British goods, non-co-operation with British administration, defiance of law and order, denunciation of Western civilisation, hatred of the British, appreciation of and respect for Hindu customs, traditions and rites, intolerance of criticism. To the warfare carried on by these weapons ostensibly against British Imperialism but in reality against the rationalist-materialist culture, Gandhi gave the attractive name of *satyagraha* (Insistence on Truth), coloured it with spiritualism and raised it to a mystical level. Not reason but faith was the final refuge of a satyagrahi. "In our warfare", declared Gandhi, "there is enough scope for reasoning; but there is a limit to it. You will go on arguing until you are convinced: but when no conviction comes, you must fall back on faith."[10]

Short-statured, slight, bespectacled and unattractive in appearance, Gandhi had a genius for dramatizing himself and any issue he raised. He could create a problem where none existed and then furiously spend energy to solve it, posing as disinterested public servant and benefactor. He understood popular psychology and puzzled the Indian mind by his enigmatic methods and mystifying utterances. By discarding

usual apparel and going about naked in only the peasant's loin-cloth, he identified himself with the poorest millions in India. He gave a new interpretation to the self-realization principle of the Vedanta by pretending that when perplexed by an intricate problem he listened to his inner voice for guidance. By such innovations he succeeded in stirring the Indian masses to their depths and in sweeping all other Congress leaders into shade.

The educated classes and intelligentsia who were baffled by Gandhi's queer and medieval views, supported by religious shibolleths, eventually fell into step, or maintained silence merely because he generated mass hysteria which was commonly but erroneously recognised as political awakening among the people. Gandhi contrived to make the Indians believe that they were morally and spiritually superior to their physically and intellectually stronger opponents.

Like Tilak and Aurobindo before him, Gandhi was solely guided in his thinking and actions by the doctrines of the Bhagavad-Gita. He said :

> "The Gita answers all my difficulties and has been my *kamadhenu*, my guide, my open sesame, in hundreds of moments of doubt and difficulty, I cannot recall a single instance when it has failed. It has become my dictionary of daily reference...I turn to this dictionary of conduct for a ready solution of all my trouble and trials. Today the Gita is not only my Bible or my Koran; it is more than that, it is my mother."

Again :

> "I must confess that when doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and when I see not one ray of light on the horizon, I turn to the Bhagavad-Gita and find a verse to comfort me."[11]

There can be no doubt that not only was Gandhi sincere in this expression but also his interpretation of the teaching of the sacred scriptures was, unlike that of many other Hindu leaders, more accurate and faithful.

Gandhi's speeches and writings are being collected and published. Fifty of them have already appeared. It is not easy to summarise what he believed in and what he aimed at

because not a little of what he said is contradictory. His admirers and opponents can, and have, heavily drawn from his writings and statements to prove their cases for or against him. A critic is therefore puzzled to fairly evaluate his philosophy of life. But he wrote, in 1908, a short treatise on Indian problem called *Hind Swaraj* in which he set forth the basic principles of his life. Since as late as 1938 he declared that "my conviction is deeper (in the views expressed in the book) than ever" and that he would alter nothing in the book except one word in deference to a lady",[12] it would not be unfair to judge him by the views, expressed in the book.

In *Hind Swaraj* Gandhi frankly admits that "religion is dear to me and first complaint is that India is becoming irreligious."[13] He did not clarify what he meant by religion but that, as we shall see, should pose no problem. His second complaint is that man should have used his faculty of intelligent thinking to unravel the mysteries of nature and stand on his legs dispensing with the belief in the Unseen Force or Universal Being. "God gifted man with intellect that he might know the Maker. Man abused it so that he might forget his Maker."[14]

Gandhi's ideas about civilisation are remarkable. He thinks that "under the modern civilisation the nations of Europe are becoming degraded and ruined day by day."[15] The "true test of (Western) civilisation lies in the fact that people living in it make bodily welfare the object of life."[16] "Civilisation seeks to increase bodily comforts and it falls miserably even in doing so."[17] "This civilisation is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed...It is eating into the vitals of English nation. It must be shunned."[18] "When its (civilisation's) full effect is realised, we shall see that religious superstition is harmless when compared to that modern civilisation." "If you give the matter some thought you will see that the terror (spread by thugs, pindarees and bhils) was by no means such a mighty thing."[19] "In order to restore India to its pristine condition, we have to return to it (old civilisation). In our civilisation there will naturally be progress, retrogression, reforms, and reactions;

but effort is required, and that is to drive out Western civilisation. All else will follow."[20]

Vehemently opposing any change in Indian society, Gandhi says : "The tendency of the Indian civilisation is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western Civilisation is to propagate immorality."[21]

"In the midst of all this (world changes) India remains immovable and that is her glory."[22] We have managed with the same kind of plough as existed thousands of years ago "and "our indigenous education remains the same as before. And where this cursed civilisation has not reached, India remains, as it was before." "Millions will always remain poor", those who want to change conditions such as I have described are enemies of the country and are sinners."[24]

Clinching the issue Gandhi affirmed : "Indian civilisation is the best and that the European is the nine days wonder."[25]

Rammohan Roy would surely turn in his grave if he were to hear the views of Gandhi on English education. Here are some of them : "The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us"[26] "I do not for a moment believe that my life would have been wasted had I not received higher or lower education."[27] "It is we, the English knowing Indians, that have enslaved India. The course of the Nation will rest not upon the English but upon us."[28] "We are so much beset by the disease of civilisation that we can not altogether do without English education."[29] "We should abandon the pretension of learning many sciences. Religious, that is ethical, education will occupy the first place."[30]

In *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi advocated the destruction of railways, hospital, law courts and even postal services. This would be, in his opinion "a consummation to be devoutly wished for." "But for the railways English could not have such a hold on India as they have. The railways have spread the bubonic plague......Railways have also increased the frequency of famines......Railways accentuate the evil nature of man."[31] "Hospitals are institutions for propagating sin. Men take less care of their bodies and mortality increases. European doctors are the worst of all."[32] "Some-

times I think that the quacks are better than highly qualified doctors."[33]

Cheap postal service introduced by the British in India is condemnable because, says Gandhi, "today anyone can abuse his fellows by means of a letter for one penny."[34] In Gandhi's opinion the Western civilisation depended on machinery and therefore it was the root of all sin. "It is machinery that has impoverished India."[35] "Machinery has begun to desolate Europe. Ruination is now knocking at the English gates. Machinery is the chief symbol of modern civilisation; it represents a great sin."[36]

Such puerile and primitive ideas have embarrassed educated followers of Gandhi who have attempted to show that in later life he modified his approach to many social and economic questions including the use of machinery. No doubt, obligingly, Gandhi made, in the closing days of his life, remarks from time to time on various subjects to present himself as not hostile to modernism. "I am uncompromisingly against all destructive machinery. But simple tools and instruments and such instruments and machinery as saves individual labour and lightens the burden of the millions of cottagers, I should welcome", [37] and "the heavy machinery for work of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human labour, has its inevitable place."[38] This provides talking points to his defenders. But such statements were rendered meaningless by Gandhi's repeated denunciation of machinery and industrialisation all through his life; as a matter of fact, he adhered basically to the belief clearly stated in the *Hind Swaraj*. "I do not believe that multiplication of wants and machinery contrived to supply them is taking the world a single step nearer its goal. I whole heartedly detest this mad desire to destroy distances and time, to increase animal appetites and go to the ends of the earth in search of their satisfaction. If modern civilisation stands for all this and I have understand it do so, I call it satanic."[39] The distortion of materialistic philosophy and vehemence of language will remind the reader of sixteenth canto of the Bhagavad Gita where from Gandhi seems to have learnt his lesson.

Gandhi was opposed to setting up of representative assemblies. He held very poor opinion of even the British Parliament. He described the Mother of Parliaments in most uncomplimentary terms like "a sterile woman and a prostitute."[40]

When Gokhale whom curiously enough, Gandhi revered as his guru, read the *Indian Home Rule* as the English version of the *Hind Swaraj* was entitled, he commented that "it was so crude and hastily conceived that the author himself will destroy the book after spending a year in India."[41] This prediction did not come true for Gandhi held firmly to his last days that *Hind Swaraj* contained the essence of his philosophy and the basic ideas that governed his outlook on life.

One may totally disagree with what Gandhi says but one can not help admiring the bluntness with which he expressed himself. In this age of science and knowledge any person with such irrational attitude, absurd doctrines and archaic views would have been declared mad. It is not surprising that Gandhi himself felt so. For he said : "Prayer has saved my life; without it, I should have been a lunatic long ago."[42] But it is amazing how the Indians even countenanced the manifestly childish notions, raised Gandhi to the position of the top-most leader and, indeed, to the pedestal of almost deity.

That Gandhi encouraged Muslims to cherish pan-Islamic sentiments and thereby nourished the two-nation theory is clear from his utterances, statements and activities from the very beginning of his career in Indian politics. He whole-heartedly supported the Khilafat movement of the Muslims which aimed at preserving and maintaining the sovereignty of the Khalifa (Sultan of Turkey) as head of the Muslim society in the world. Indeed, he was so enthusiastic about it that he was elected as President of the All-India Khilafat Conference on November 24, 1919, at Delhi. Under his guidance "the Congress lent the full support of its power, prestige and organization to the cause of the Khilafat" says R.C. Majumdar : "By his own admission that the Khilafat question was a vital one for Indian Muslims, Gandhi himself admitted in a way that they formed a separate nation; they were in India, but not of India."[43]

It was characteristic of Gandhi that throughout his life he wooed religious fanatics among the Muslims—ulemas and

maulanas—who sat at his feet, but he could not become friendly with modern-minded and westernized intellectual Muslims. Thus, despite his sincere desire to establish peace and national unity, he was instrumental in fanning the flames of communal animosity and accentuating Hindu-Muslim ill-will.

After the momentous declaration in the House of Commons on August 20, 1917, it was not necessary to launch any aggressive agitation against the British to achieve independence. That declaration made it clear that "the progressive realisation of Responsible Government in India as an integral part of the British Empire" was the policy of His Majesty's Government and it was in line with the repeated pronouncements of a number of British statesmen referred to earlier. The goal of independence could have been reached by successfully working the Constitution and by proving that Indian leaders were capable of running the administration and defending the country on their own. But it cannot be too often repeated that the aspiration of the militant revivalists was not merely to see the end of British rule; they also aimed at uprooting secular culture, critical outlook and rational ideas which had spread under that rule. It needed raising a duststorm to befog intellect and thus bring the British and their institutions into contempt. When along with the British rule, notions on egalitarianism were brought into disrepute the soil would became congenial and could be fertilized for tradition-bound and anti-democratic Hinduism to thrive.

As stated above the ground had been already prepared and seed of anti-science and anti-West ideas sown by Tilak and Aurobindo, Gandhi's task was to water it and fertilize it. This he did very ably. That Gandhi was more interested in beclouding the minds by creating mass excitement and hysteria than achieving India's freedom can be seen from his behaviour at certain crucial times in the history of the struggle. For example, in November 1921, Lord Reading (1921-26) initiated negotiations through Madan Mohan Malaviya when all other prominent Congress leaders were imprisoned in the first mass agitation called the Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Gandhi. There were long discussions among Congress stalwarts like C.R. Das, Abul Kalam Azad, Malaviya and others in the Calcutta

Jail. As a result of it important national demands were accepted by the British authorities yet laying petty conditions to satisfy his ego, Gandhi refused to agree to the deal and it fell through. Reporting the incident in his book the Indian Struggle, Subash Chandra Bose who was an inmate of the same jail, records : "The Deshbandhu (C.R. Das) was beside himself with anger and disgust. The chances of a lifetime, he said, had been lost."[44]

Gandhi unreservedly rejected modern values and ideas. In the disintegration of Hindu life, he clearly saw the evil effects of secular culture. But he was shrewd enough not to denounce democracy or secularism openly for fear of alienating the sympathies of progressive and educated classes in India and abroad. He knew that only by appealing to the justice implicit in these values could he further his own revivalist mission. Only under cover of slogans advocating reason, human freedom, equality and fraternity the ancient system of religious supremacy could be restored. That was exactly the method applied by Sri Krishna at the time of Mahabharata War and by Shankaracharya in his fight against Buddhism. Gandhi revived that method and used it effectively. He was a past master in rousing the passions and prejudices alike of the illiterate and the educated. As ill-luck would have it, the frightened and demoralised British administrators played into his hands.

On March 21, 1919, the Government of Lord Chelmsford (1916-21) passed the Rowlatt Act, a drastic piece of legislation curtailing the liberty of the people. It was never used but it gave wide powers to the police to deal with political workers suspected of anti-Government intentions. As a shrewd politician Gandhi seized upon the opportunity, opposed the Act and launched, on March 31, his first satyagraha, a mass protest. It started with a hartal on April 6 and public meetings all over India. He proclaimed that, "co-operation in any shape or form with this satanic government is sinful." The satyagraha was not a success. But it led to a tragedy in the Punjab. On April 13, a protest meeting was held in the Jallianwalla Bagh (Amritsar) attended by about 10,000 people. General Rex Dyer ordered the people to disperse as the meeting was unlawful having been banned by an official announcement.

But without waiting for their dispersal the General asked his men to fire on the unarmed, helpless multitude "to teach them a lesson." It resulted in a carnage when no fewer than 379 (official report) to 1000 (unofficial estimate) people were killed and over 1200 wounded. The British in India as well as in Britain generally supported the massacre and Dyer was presented with a handsome amount and an address in London in token of his invaluable services to the Empire.

On April, 15, Martial law was imposed on the Punjab and punitive measures like flogging and even, at one place, enforced crawling by Indians sent a wave of indignation throughout the country. Gandhi would hardly miss the opportunity to further his mission of bringing disrepute into the British Government as well as the Western culture.

It was Gandhi Law who perfected the political philosophy initiated by B. G. Tilak and Aurobindo Ghose and created mass hysteria by skilfully utilizing and exploiting religious sentiments and ancient prejudices through satyagraha which gave the Indian movement for independence a definite irrational and anti-British direction. Though clothed in non-violent garb, the satyagraha, more often than not, led to vulgarity, riots, arson, bloodshed and destruction of property.

It was a fundamental belief of the Mahatma that an individual is a plaything in the hands of God. He gave foremost place to religion in all human affairs. "He saw life and religion as an integrated admixture", says V.K.R.V. Rao, one of his Western-educated disciples, "and could find no reason why politics and economics could not be spiritualized. He was obsessed by religion and almost hysterical about God."[45] For me there is no politics devoid of religion; they subserve religion", Gandhi affirmed, "Politics bereft of religion are death-adder because they kill the soul." Nehru has said that "Gandhi was essentially a man of religion, a Hindu to the innermost depths of his being."[46] No wonder that the freedom movement assumed a Hindu complexion. All importtant political functions started with a Hindu ritual or ceremony. An annual session of the Congress presented scenes of kumbh mela (Hindu religious congregation) and not of a gathering of intelligent, thinking and discriminating delegates

belonging to the premier political organisation of the country.

Gandhi had little faith in modern democracy. His ideal was benevolent despotism applauded by Brahmin lawgivers which he called Ram Rajya and frequently recommended it as free India's political goal.

Gandhi might not have been the success that he was but for the assistance that he could secure of two outstanding men : Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (b 1888), the scholastic propounder of non-Brahminism in the twentieth century and Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964) the idol of youthful and educated India.

Radhakrishnan to whose writings I have often referred in this book, was born to a Telegu Brahmin family at Tiruttani in Madras Presidency. Educated in local Christian College, he taught philosophy with distinction in Mysore and Calcutta for thirteen years (1918-31). It was during this period that he imbibed his ideas and finalized his views on philosophy, religion and politics. He wrote voluminously and was invited by universities in his own country and abroad to deliver lectures interpreting the Eastern and Western schools of thought. He shone not only as a writer of repute but also as an orator who kept his audience spell bound. Sentences flowed from his mouth with ease and calm as water in a deep and broad river. His writings were characterized by lucidity, grace and urbanity. The felicity of his style was seen even more clearly in his speeches. His memory being phenomenal he could keep without a bit of paper to assist him and sophisticated gathering enthralled by his speech. With his command over English language he marshalled his material with cousummate mastery. He surpassed all leaders in India in forceful expression of views and very few have used the word whether written or spoken so effectively as he. Such a gifted man was needed by revivalist leaders in the twenties of this century to provide a philosophical basis for Hindu nationalist movement which it lacked.

As stated above, Indian Renaissance had fizzled out by the end of the last century; its place had been taken by a movement of religious reform and of revival of the Brahmin philosophy. Return to the pristine purity of Vedic ritualism was passionately adovocated by the Hindu reformers. The standard bearers

of India's spiritual mission sought to provide a philosophical sanction to the revivalism but there was none among them who besides being equipped with adequate knowledge of Eastern and Western philosophical systems, could have also the capability to raise neo-Brahminism to the level of a philosophy. One and all, the Hindu leaders and savants with dogmatic assertions oversimplified the matters : Western thought was materialistic and Indian thought spiritualistic. But their exposition of Indian philosophy fell short of academic erudition. It was left to Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan to raise the politically motivated religious and cultural revivalism to the level of academic philosophy. He backed up his criticism of Western rationalist thought with sufficient knowledge of it. He became the first intelligent exponent of post-Buddhist scholastic theology in contemporary age expounding the Vedanta as the quintessence of the philosophical thought of ancient India.

Radhakrishnan met Gandhi in 1915 and cultivated spiritual and social kinship not only with him but also with other prominent nationalist leaders like Tagore and Nehru whom he greatly admired. By 1928 he had intellectually identified himself with the Congress movement though he did not actively participate in the satyagraha struggle nor even join the Congress till independence was achieved in 1947.

There is marked difference between what Radhakrishnan taught before his intimate association with the Hindu nationalist and after he was fully drawn towards the revivalist movement.

In his writings till 1920 there are indications that he cherished faith in rationalism and was opposed to religion dominating philosophy. Elucidating the meaning of philosophy in his early treatises, he wrote that philosophy arose out of logical demands and aimed at theoretical satisfaction; it is an intellectual attempt to deal with the nature of reality in its entirety; it tries to organize the whole of experience; what it seeks is a reasoned explanation are not faith. He did not find any antagonism between philosophy and science. There is no difference, he asserted, between philosophical and scientific methods, both are concerned with logic and criticism. To clarify it further, he said that direct and immediate experience

or intuition is not the method of philosophy; it is rational thinking on which philosophy must be based; we must give up such of our beliefs which are not supported by reason, without trying to find a basis for them in emotion, immediate experience or intuition."[47]

In these earlier writings the only difference between philosophy and science pointed out by Radhakrishnan was that all experience is the subject matter of philosophy whereas each science restricts itself to some select group of facts; takes partial view of the whole that is reality, while philosophy considers the properties of a whole as a whole."[48]

Such ideas should have led Radhakrishnan into the camp of the Rationalists, but the closer he came to Hindu revivalists the more removed he was from the rationalist outlook. After 1920 he imbibed idealistic notions and neo-Brahmin philosophy of which he soon became the staunchest advocate.

He began by raising doubts about the knowledge gained through senses for arriving at the Reality. First, one must develop a metaphysical bent of mind, he said, without accepting all that is seen as absolutely real. Philosophy, he held, carries one only to the gates of the promised land but cannot let one in for which insight or realization is necessary. Reversing his earlier position in this way he slowly but steadily took the path of idealism. No philosophical scheme is complete, he declared "if it has not the different sides of logic and metaphysics, psychology and ethics, metaphysics and religion." Again, he said, "any philosophical construction can be secure only if it is based not only on logic but on the latest scientific knowledge and religious experience."

To maintain his new stance, Radhakrishnan wrote one after another the *Philosophy of Upanishads*, (1924), the *Hindu View of Life* (1926) and the *Idealistic Way of Life* (1919). His magnum opus, *Indian Philosophy*, in two volumes was also published in the years when the nationalist movement had assumed completely anti-West and religious complexion, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Radhakrishnan's emphasis was now more and more on intuition and religious experience, less on rational thought. Declaring that philosophy should not be remote from people's life he said sense experience, discursive reasoning

and intuitive apprehension are the three ways of knowing the real. Intuition, in his opinion, is continuous with thought and is dependent upon it and is immanent in it. But, he added, protracted and sustained study and analysis result in intuition, so it is higher than discursive reasoning from which it comes forth.

Significantly, Radhakrishnan's new conception of philosophy crystallized in 1930, or thereabout, when India witnessed a mass civil disobedience movement under the Congress flag. Intuition, he said, is the creative source of thinking as well as its end; it is supralogical wisdom produced by the response of one's whole being to reality. He called it *Samyag jnana* or *aprokshajnana* (non-sensuous immediate knowledge) in which there is an "intimate fusion of mind with reality."[43] This sort of knowledge cannot be conceived; it can be known only by having it.

Radhakrishnan's earlier suspicion of intuition vanished and his belief in it became stronger and firmer year after year. He no doubt continued to pay lip sympathy to reason but reliance on intuition and "spiritual" experience became predominent in his writings and speeches. Rational reflection and spiritual experience are in tune with each other, he explained; when they are integrated a coherent and harmonious system of thought can be built up. He would call such a system as perennial philosophy "which is the core of the teachings of all the sages and mystics." The common recurring dominant theme in all of them must be the eternal fundamental wisdom."[49]

Replying to those who criticised him for gradually becoming unreal, he said that idealism does not necessarily maintain that world is made of mind or that everything is an idea. It is possible for even realistic system to agree with the basic idealist doctrines."[50]

Though Radhakrishnan declared that dogmas did not constitute philosophy and no belief must be held merely because a scripture sanctions it, he, at the same time and more emphatically, held that "philosophy is entitled and ought to take as its materials not only empirical facts, the results of logical investigation and scientific knowledge, but also spiritual intuitions contained in the scriptures and the writings of the mystics and

sages."[51] He was thus rendering his own earlier thesis meaningless by the new one. Nevertheless, he believed that his philosophical system which was "at once rational and spiritual was original."[52]

Radhakrishnan's conception of perennial philosophy is based on affirmation that the Absolute which is arrived at as a conclusion of rational reflection is directly and immediately apprehended by the sages, prophets, and mystics. Absolute is inexpressible, suprapersonal, relationless mystery which reveals itself to us as God. "In Radhakrishnan's philosophy", comments M.N. Roy, "God pervades the universe, which is spiritual reality. The knowledge of reality, therefore, is identical with the knowledge of God; philosophy is theology—that is the tradition of the Vedantic pantheism which Radhakrishnan expounds as the Hindu philosophy."[53]

It is no surprise that having jumped headlong into the depths of mysticism and having acquired complete faith in Hindu scriptures, Radhakrishnan should try to show that scepticism, naturalism, atheism etc., are not tenable philosophies and that the Vedanta alone can pass the test of being the perennial philosophy. He translated the Bhagavad-Gita and wrote a comprehensive commentary on it saying that "it serves even today as the light of all who will receive illumination from the profundity of its wisdom."[54]

In his speeches in India and abroad, Radhakrishnan eloquently expatiated on Gandhism as the answer to human hatred and violence. In 1934, he declared : "Gandhi's appeal will be written not only by the side of the utterances of the the great national leaders like Pericles and Cicero, or Washington and Lincoln, but also of the great religious reformers, as that one of the immortal voices of the the human race in all that relates to the highest effort of men and nations."[55] Besides producing treatises and tomes on Indian philosophical systems in the light of Western knowledge, he wrote books on Hindu leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore. Being a capable and well-informed man the Hindu leaders turned to him for carrying to different parts of the globe the message of New Resurgent Hindu India. He travelled widely for the purpose. Thus for the major part of his life he assumed the role of a

propagandist for Neo-Brahminist politicians. He has raised our reputation and prestige, to "alarming heights", admitted Jawaharlal Nehru.[56]

Radhakrishnan's philosophy has been differently evaluated both here and abroad. To the nationalist Hindus he is the greatest thinker of modern India. But there are many who see no originality, no creative thinking and no valuable contribution to pure thought in what he wrote. His writings are considered full of inconsistencies. Even K. Satchidananda Murti, one of his numerous admirers, confessess that "a devastating criticism of Radhakrishnan's idea of philosophy is possible."[57] In the west the idealist thinkers hailed him, in the words of C. A. Moore, "as the Thomas Aquinos (1225-1274) of the modern age." C. E. M. Joad characterised his exposition of the Hindu view of life as "a counter attack from the East." But the rationalists have always looked askance at him. The disciples of thinkers like Quine and Max Black fail to find any shred of philosophy in his writings which they term barren.

A balanced appraisal of Radhakrishnan's works has perhaps been made by Swami Agehananda Bharati (Leopold Fischer), an advaita monk, born in Austria. Deploring confusion in Indian thinking the Swami observes : "In India there has always been the tendency to make the two one, philosopher and theologian. This is a bit tragic for it has hampered free philosophic enquiry in this country. We definitely claim that India has not left its scholastic era nor does it desire to do so; on the other hand, India is steeped in schoolmanship, in utter theology. The fact that, of the six classical systems of Indian philosophy (which Radhakrishnan calls Brahminical systems) virtually only one is extant, so far as followers are concerned, seems to be fair evidence concering the validity of this statement. It is Vedanta which counts today; and Vedanta is theology far more than the other five systems. The Hindu philosopher nowadays is a Vedantin by implication; and what is worse, he is a branch Vedantin, a monist, a dualist, or holds a modified position in varying degree"[58] Paying tributes to Radhakrishnan's wide learning, prodigious reading, prolific writing and the mastery of a fine language, Swami Agehananda

concludes : "We hold that professor Radhakrishnan is a theologian and that he is the theologian of Hinduism."[59]

Under the Congress Raj, Radhakrishnan rose step by step to the pinnacle of his glory, but ultimately the philosopher of peace made himself look pathetic and ridiculous when India fought two avoidable wars while he occupied the most exalted position of the President of Indian Republic. But about it I shall say more later at its proper place.

Jawaharlal Nehru was the product of Western Culture on whose shoulders the mantle of rationalism and progressive secularism of the nineteeth century, or for that matter, of the entire Indian history, seemed to have fallen.

Born in a liberal Kashmiri Pandit Family, Nehru had his education at Harrow and Cambridge. A student of science and law he imbibed while young the spirit of the modern age. On return to India, his imagination was fired with the ambition of liberating the homeland from foreign domination and raising the poverty-stricken and religion-ridden Indian masses to a human level. Brave in spirit, outspoken in views, progressive in outlook, critical equally of the foreign rule and the native obscurantism, sympathetic towards lowly but haughty towards powerful, Nehru became the ideal of younger generation and hope of the educated classes. Naturally they looked to him for guidance when the nation had arrived at the crossroads and was involved in a political and cultural crisis.

Jawaharlal Nehru joined the Congress a year or two earlier than Gandhi did. But he came to prominence after Gandhi had secured hold over the organisation and started his activities against the British rule and Western culture.

For over a century, as we have seen, Indians had learnt, a a new philosophy of life, characterised by reason and science which upheld democratic values totally opposed to the caste-ridden Indian social system. They had also witnessed their country emerging from chaos and anarchy as a united, peaceful and progressive nation, taking strides towards prosperity. But now they were told that all this change was sinful, that wisdom and happiness lay in going back and reviving the institutions which had brutalized the people and brought India to the brink of ruin. The Indians were puzzled and wanted to know

what the truth was and which path led to real peace and salvation. Who but Jawaharlal Nehru, the new rising star, could provide the right answer. For he symbolised the moral and spiritual crisis in which the educated man in India was involved. Like Arjuna at the time of the Mahabharata War, Nehru was the typical intellectual agonized by the pulls of two contradictory forces, secular democracy on the one side and the reactionary Hinduism on the other. It often perplexed him and more in dismay than as a mark of achievement he described himself as a "queer mixture of the East and the West."

Though Nehru acknowledged the leadership of Gandhi as early as 1919, he entertained, like Arjuna, many doubts about the philosophy and practices of his guru. He would frequently express them in his statements and writings. "Ideologically", said Nehru of Gandhi, "he was sometimes amazingly backward" and "much that he says seems to fit in with a medieval Christian saint and not at all with modern psychological experience and method."[60] When Gandhi resorted to a fast till death in 1932 to get the untouchables accepted by the British as part of the Hindu community in the general elections to legislatures, Nehru remarked : "I felt angry with him at his religious and sentimental approach to a political question and his fequent utterances to God in connection with it. He even seemed to suggest that God had indicated the very date of the fast. What a terrible example to set."[61] Such forthright criticism conveyed an assurance to the thoughtful and progressive sections and, infact, to the entire Indian nation that Nehru was cast in the rationalist frame and possessed the required revolutionary fervour.

In his *Autobiography*, which appeared in 1933, Nehru pointed out numerous contradictions in Gandhi's life. It puzzled him how the Mahatma could reconcile his solicitude for the underdog with the support for a system which inevitably produced it and crushed it. He wondered : "Why with all his passion for non-violence he is in favour of a political and social structure which is wholly based on violence and coercion."[62]

Nehru believed that Gandhi had fixed ideas and that his mind was hardly open. He pointed out: "He (Gandhi) has also no desire to raise the standard of the masses beyond a certain very modest competence, for higher standards and leisure may lead to self indulgence and sin."[63]

There seemed to be little in common between the two leaders. Nehru was a believer in change while Gandhi was deadly opposed to it as seen above. Nehru said: "It is quite certain that we cannot stand where we are, nationally and internationally; we may try to go back or we may push forward. Probably there is no choice in the matter, for going back seems inconceivable. And yet many of Gandhiji's activities might lead one to think that he wants to go back to the narrowest autarchy, not only a self-sufficient nation, but almost a self-sufficient village."[64]

Again, lashing at Gandhi's opposition to change, Nehru remarked: "It is clear that the good of a nation or mankind must not be held up because some people who profit by the existing order object to the change. If the political or social institutions stand in the way of such change they have to be removed. To compromise with them at the cost of that desirable and practical ideal would be gross betrayal."[65] If Gandhi's philosophy of no-change is accepted, observed, Nehru, "it comes to this, then, that whatever is should continue, the status quo should be maintained."[66]

A staunch supporter of industrialisation, Nehru had no admiration for fads like handspun cloth which Gandhi considered to be *sine qua non* for *swaraj* (self rule). "The Khadi movement, handspinning and hand-weaving which is Gandhiji's special favourite, is an intensification of individualism in production and is thus a throwback to the pre-Industrial age."[67]

Nothing upset Nehru more than the trusteeship theory and the mediaeval outlook of Gandhi. He considered it not only to be revivalistic in essence but also anti-poor. He thought that anyone with such views as Gandhi's could not be friend of the oppressed or supporter of democracy. "With all his intellect and passion for bettering the down-trodden and oppressed", Nehru wondered, "why does he (Gandhi) support a

system, and a system which is obviously decaying, which creates this misery and waste ? He seeks a way out, it is true, but is not that way to the past barred and bolted ? And meanwhile he blesses all the relics of the old order which stand as obstacles in the way of advance—the feudal states, the big zamindaris and taluqdaris, the present capitalist system to give unchecked power and wealth to an individual and to expect him to use it entirely for the public good."[68] Nehru relevantly asked : "If there is anything in this idea of trusteeship, why should we object to the claim of the British Government that they are trustees for the Government of India ? Except for the fact that they are foreigners in India I see no difference."[69]

Having given vent to his acute feelings over the vast and basic differences in his thinking and that of Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, to soften the blow, said : "People who do not know Gandhiji personally and have only read his writings think that he is a priestly type, extremely puritanical and kill-joy. But his writings do him an injustice; he is far greater than what he writes, and it is not quite fair to quote what he has written and criticised."[70]

That is a queer way of defending the Mahatma. We know and judge the great philosophers and thinkers like Buddha, Mahavira and Shankaracharya, Epicurus, Socrates and Plato primarily through their utterances and writings. Nehru was asking his readers to shut their eyes to what Gandhi wrote but believe in what his pupil says in his defence. Even then Gandhi does not emerge as a modern man but as a faddist and revivalist who obstructed the progress of India. However, for the astute Mahatma the apologia was a sufficient indication of the indecisive nature of Nehru's mind. He must have grasped that despite his doubts and misgivings, Nehru, like Arjuna, was not entirely lost and could be claimed by the cult of neo-Brahminism.

36

Triumph of Hindu Nationalism (ii)

THAT Nehru was a weak-minded person is evident from even his earliest writings. In a letter written in May 1909 to his mother from England about his marriage, he protested : "in my opinion everyone in India should marry outside his or her community. Then why should not I act according to my beliefs...In my opinion it is not essential that I should marry a Kashmiri. I have thought over this question time and again every time I am more and more convinced of this." Two years later he resigned himself to the parental pressure and wrote to his father : "As regards my marriage you know my views well enough and it is hardly necessary for me to repeat them here. I do not and cannot possibly look forward with relish to the idea of marrying a girl whom I do not know...If you are intent on getting me engaged to the girl you mention, I have no objection to offer. Only I should like you to put it off till I have seen her. That ought not to disarrange matters very much as I expect to be back in India before long. If you think you cannot manage this, than you are welcome to do as you wish and I shall abide by your decision."[1]

That was the way Nehru behaved throughout his life. Gandhi was a remarkably good judge of character and he was able to see that despite his profession of radical views and

agnosticism, Jawaharlal could be made to serve as an instrument for instilling Brahmin doctrines among the people particularly the sceptics and wavering educated sections. The Mahatma realized that he had to be persistent in persuading Nehru to give up his resolve to stand by modernism and the hero of young India would sooner or later surrender; subsequent events proved that Gandhi was right.

Gandhi displayed great zeal for social reform of the Hindus, for removal of untouchability in particular. But he was not prepared to overstep the limits laid down by Brahminism; hence his achievements were little. As a faithful follower of the Gita doctrines, Gandhi believed in the theory of karma and samsara. He was a champion of *varnashrama dharma*. When asked to state his views on it, he replied :

> "It is not a human invention, but an immutable law of Nature—the statement of a tendency that is ever-present and at work like Newton's Law of Gravitation. Just as the Law of Gravitation existed even before it was discovered, so did the Law of Varna. It was given to the Hindu to discover that law. By their discovery and application of certain laws of Nature, the peoples of the West have easily increased their material possessions. Similarly, Hindus by their discovery of this irresistible social tendency have been able to achieve in the spiritual field what no other nation in the world has achieved."[2]

Gandhi held that "*varna* is the best form of insurance of happiness and for real religious pursuit." With such a view of caste-system it is hardly surprising that he declared : "A Shudra has as much right to knowledge as a Brahmin, but he falls from his estate if he tries to gain his livelihood through teaching...the only profession after his heart should be the profession of his fathers."[3] That is he must for ever remain a slave to serve the upper castes.

In 1928, the Social Conference founded by M.G. Ranade passed a resolution declaring that "the present caste system is a great obstacle to the unification of the Hindu society, and therefore resolves that its abolition should be expedited by (a) encouraging true interdining (b) promoting inter-caste marriages and (c) removing untouchability and all disabilities arising therefrom wherever they exist." To effectuate these proposals

was not easy especially when Gandhi threw his whole weight against them. Dr. Majumdar says : "The progress of the social reform movement suffered a sudden reverse when Mahatma Gandhi, at the height of his power and popularity, declared himself in favour of maintaining the varnashrama dharma (caste obligations) and specifically objected to inter-dining and inter-marriage."[4] The historian points out : "It is not perhaps without significance that as nationalism advanced in India, the ardour for social reform visibly declined."[5]

It is not my intention to denigrate the Mahatma or deny his achievements in various fields. He brought dignity to poverty enabling the poorest and lowliest in India to participate in the struggle against British Imperialism. He aroused the masses making them conscious that they counted no less in importance than the rich and educated in the movement. Despite his ill treatment of Kasturba, his wife, he drew young women in large numbers out of the seclusion of houses to be in the midst of social activities. He stirred a sense of patriotism in the student community. Above all, he banished fear of the authority from the minds of his compatriots who rose to fight injustice and high-handedness. But these achievements were offset by his anti-secular, counterrevolutionary and Brahminical outlook.

Gandhi launched three mass agitations in 1920, 1930 and 1942 known to history as "Non-Cooperation", "Civil Disobedience" and "Quit India" movements respectively. Tempting though it is to do so, space forbids to deal comprehensively with the various episodes of the three agitations. Here is the verdict passed on them by the nationalist historian, R.C. Majumdar, as recorded at different places in Bhavan's *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Volume Eleven :

> "The movement for boycotting the councils was a complete failure...On the whole, the movement for the boycott of the schools and colleges proved a failure.[6]...The boycott of titles and honours, as well as Government offices, was a hopeless failure."[7]...Thus the great civil disobedience campaign came to an ignoble end, in spite of all the brave and the heroic deeds of which any nation may feel proud. On the eve of his famous march to

> Dandi, which started the campaign, Gandhi had said: 'Civil Disobedience once begun this time, cannot be stopped and must not be stopped so long as there is a single civil resister left free or alive.' What puzzled the Indians most was the leader's order to lay down arms and surrender even before the soldiers had abandoned the grim struggle."[8]..."Gandhi had practically given up the fight for freedom on 18th August 1942.[9]..."So far as India is concerned the year 1942-43 marks the end of her struggle for freedom. The revolutionary movement which had begun early in this century, as well as the non-violent satyagraha which Gandhi had launched in 1920, both came to an end almost simultaneously, without achieving freedom."[10]

Refuting the two claims of the Congressmen that India achieved freedom by non-violent satyagraha and under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the nationalist historian observes :..."to call the movement of 1942 as a non-violent movement in any sense, is nothing but perversion of truth, a travesty of facts . It is well known, and the Congress was first to admit, that the movement collapsed in two months time and India had to wait for five more years before it achieved freedom under very different circumstances."[11]

Disregarding the reasoned decisions of his own Nehru actively participated in all the agitations launched by Gandhi irrespective of the results achieved.

On March 5, 1931, a pact was signed by Lord Irwin, Viceroy (1926-31), and Gandhi to create an atmosphere of peace and order for the success of the Second Round Table Conference in London. Nehru was dissatisfied with a clause of the pact. "I knew most of the clauses for they had been often discussed, but, at the very top, clause 2 with its reference to safe-guards, etc., gave me a tremendous shock. I was wholly unprepared for it."[12] Gandhi had a long talk with Nehru and gave his own interpretation of Clause 2. Result; let Nehru say : "The interpretation seemed to me to be a forced one, and I was not convinced but I was somewhat soothed by the talk. The merits of the agreement apart, I told him that the way of springing surprises upon us frightened me; there was something unknown about him which in spite of the closest association for fourteen years, I could not understand at all and which

filled me with apprehension. He admitted the presence of this unknown element in him."[13]

It would be worthwhile for the reader to go through the dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna in the eleventh canto of the Bhagavad-Gita and compare it with this conversation between Nehru and Gandhi. The confused intellectual is awe-struck and terrified by the leader's personality and helplessly follows him.

Nehru's subsequent behaviour is also not unlike that of Arjuna. When a resolution to approve the Irwin-Gandhi pact was brought before the annual session of the Congress at Karachi on March 29, 1931, Gandhi asked Nehru to move it. Jawaharlal first declined to do so. It went against his grain, he said, but at the last moment he "decided to sponsor it".

How and why did rationalist Nehru surrender to mystic Gandhi ? Let us hear what Nehru himself has to say in this behalf : "Personality is an indefinable thing, a strange force that has power over the souls of men and he possesses this in ample measure...He attracted people...They did not agree with his philosophy of life or even with many of his ideals. Often they did not understand him...How he disciplined our lazy and demoralised people and made them work, not by force or any material inducement, but by a gentle look and a soft word, and, above all, by personal example. Umar Sobhani called him "beloved slave-driver."[14] And to this slave-driver Nehru himself was destined to make obeisance.

During the Gandhi era of the Indian Freedom Struggle courting imprisonment and acclaiming the Mahatma's idiosyncrasies were the hall-mark of patriotism and high moral character. Intellect and reason were banished from private and public discussions and rowdyism had taken their place. Many dullards and scoundrels had come to the forefront in public life. "A politician may of course succeed in his business without being a shining example of reason or intelligence", confessed Nehru.[15]

Some eminent leaders expressed disgust with what was happening. Mrs. Annie Besant, who presided over the Calcutta session of the National Congress in 1917, said in a public speech :

> "Under the Gandhi Raj there is no free speech, no open meeting except for non-cooperators. Social and religious boycott, threats to person, violence, spitting, insults in the streets are methods of oppression. Mob support is obtained by wild promises, such as the immediate coming of swaraj, when there will be no rents, no taxes by giving to Gandhi high religious name, such as mahatma and avatara, assigning to him supernatural powers and the like."[16]

Even a blue-blooded nationalist like Subhash Chandra Bose was not tolerated by the Mahatma because he had the temerity to disagree with the "slave-driver." When in August 1939 he was declared disqualified as President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and to be a member of any elective Congress body for three years, it was believed at the time, says R.C. Majumdar, that the decision "was inspired not by a sense of justice or discipline but by a personal bias against Subhash Bose and a desire to drive from the Congress one who had the hardihood to defy Gandhi and, worse still, scored a victory against him."[17] True to the traditions of Brahminism, the followers of Gandhi created moral terror and shut the mouths of the opposition. The victory of Gandhism, which was the victory of a new kind of nationalism over all the previous forms of rational nationalism preached and practised in modern India, forced the men of all old schools not only into silence but into incomprehension."[18]

The clever Kashmiri Brahmin, Jawaharlal Nehru, however, played safe. Gradually he learnt how to blunt the edge of his criticism and began totally surrendering to the Mahatma by close of the thirties. In the Ahmednagar fort where he was imprisoned from 1942-45 along with other Congress leaders, he recorded his conversion to Brahminism in his book, *The Discovery of India*. It revealed the sea-change that had taken place in the thinking of the pseudo-revolutionist. Nehru, the author of *The Discovery of India*, is quite a different person from the Nehru who wrote the *Autobiography*. The man who used to feel proud of being an agnostic now declared :

> "Essentially, I am interested in this world, in this life, not in some other world or a future life. Whether there is such a thing as a soul, or whether there is a survival

after death or not, I do not know; and important as these questions are, they do not trouble me in the least. The environment in which I have grown up takes the soul (or rather the *atma*) and a future life, the karma theory of cause and effect, and reincarnation for granted. I have been affected by this and so, in a sense, I am favourably disposed towards these assumptions. There might be a soul which survives the physical death of the body, and a theory of cause and effect governing life's actions seems reasonable, though it leads to obvious difficulties when one thinks of the ultimate cause. Presuming a soul, there appears to be some logic also in the theory of reincarnation."[19]

Was Arjuna of the Bhagavad-Gita suffering from greater mental confusion than this ?

The Discovery of India abounds in contradictory statements on may topics that Nehru tried to dilate upon. It is a proof of the miserable state of mind in which he was after he had fully accepted the basic doctrines of the Gita as preached and practised by the Mahatma. Having paid tributes to reason and its role in the quest for truth Nehru adds : "Let us, therefore, not rule out intuition and other methods of sensing truth and reality. They are even necessary for the purposes of science."[20]

Nehru discovered the greatness of ancient India not in the achievements of the Buddhist Revolution but in the Gupta Rule which he called the Golden Age because "the writings of the period...reveal a serenity, a quiet confidence of the people in themselves, and a glow of pride at being priviledged to be alive in the high noon of civilisation, and with it the urge to use their great intellectual and artistic powers to the utmost."[21] Then, characteristically, he adds : "Yet even before that Golden Age had come to a close, signs of weakness and decay become visible...and inner weakness seems to seize India, which effects not only her political status but her creative activities."[22]

By quoting from *The Discovery of India* it is not difficult to show that Nehru stands for religion or anti-religion, for caste or against it, for revivalism or anti-revivalism, for nationalism, or anti-nationalism, for Brahminism or anti-Brahminism. If he is decisive about anything it is that "Gandhi was always there as a symbol of uncompromising truth to pull us up and shame

us into truth."[23] There is not one word of criticism regarding the Mahatma's philosophy or his practices. To Nehru's mind British rule became an unmitigated evil. He was not prepared to give the least credit to the British Government for what it did during a whole century to raise India from abysmal wretchedness. He said : "Change came to India because of this impact of the West, but it came almost in spite of the British in India. They succeeded in slowing down the pace of that change to such an extent that even today the transition is very far from complete."[24]

Critics of the Congress and supporters of the rule of law were in the eyes of Nehru quislings and traitors.[25]

The Discovery of India makes no mention of the social evils like human sacrifice, infanticide, thuggee, polygamy, ban on widow remarriage, etc., from which Indians suffered and which were eradicated by British rulers in the nineteenth century. About the only abominable evil which he cursorily deals with as if of no consequence, Nehru says : "This suttee, or immolation of women on the funeral pyre of their husbands, was never widespread. But rare instances continued to occur among the upper classes."[26]

Unlike the *Autobiography*, *The Discovery of India* is a propagandist literature and sadly reveals the loss of Nehru's critical faculty. In the concluding part of the book the author himself confesses : "Looking back at what I have written it seems inadequate, disjoined and lacking in unity, a mixture of many things with the personal elements dominant and giving its colour even to what was intended to be an objective record and analysis."[27] It was submissive Nehru and not the sceptic Nehru whom Gandhi required to achieve the supreme aim on which he had set his mind. Modern Sri Krishna had after all succeeded in converting the hesitant, wavering modern Arjuna to his side. Appropriately therefore the Mahatma publicly declared that Nehru would be his heir after his death.

There were, however, three forces in India which Gandhi failed to subdue : (1) Radicals under the leadership of M. N. Roy (1972-1854), (2) Untouchables awakened by B.R. Ambedkar (1891-1956) and (3) Muslims led by M. A. Jinnah (1876-1948).

M. N. Roy was born of Brahmin parents in a Bengal village

on March 21, 1872. As a full-blooded nationalist while in his teens he had left India during the days of the First World War in search of arms to fight against British Imperialism, but circumstances compelled him to stay abroad for nearly 15 years roaming in different parts of the world.

He achieved great fame as a revolutionary thinker, and becoming a member of the Third International, worked as a colleague of Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin in Russia. He returned to India in 1931. After undergoing a long term of imprisonment for anti-Government activities abroad, Roy collected, in 1936, a band of rationalists and joined the Congress to fight a two-pronged battle against British Imperialism and Brahmin nationalism. Roy wrote over fifty books to explain the philosophy of Radical Humanism which he preached and his plans for cultural and social emancipation of the Indian people. The burden of his theme is that Indians need a philosophical revolution, a radical change in outlook before they can aspire to be free, "Man is not born free", he said "Man is born to be free. To be free is the essence of human life."

To clarify the common fallacies about philosophy, Roy said "Devoid of science philosophy is religious belief. Philosophy, to deserve its name, is the integration of all the knowledge acquired through investigations of the various branches of nature into a coherent world view."[28] And what is Radical Humanism ? According to Roy "the philosophy of Humanism maintains that man is capable of attaining freedom not only in imagination but in actuality. Because this philosophy attaches supreme importance to man and places man in the centre of everything, it was called Humanism."[29]

The core of the crisis in modern times is that man has lost faith in himself. "Man has disappeared", maintained Roy, "from the scene of social thought and social engineering. When man is degraded and relegated to such a position, naturally he loses confidence in himself."[30] Therefore, "the solution of the our time lies in the revival of man's faith in himself."[31]

Though commonly believed to be a communist, Roy in later days of his life disagreed with many communist doctrines. Unlike the Russian communists, he attached great importance to morality in social affairs. "Moral sanction, after all, is the

greatest sanction, real guarantee of the Parliamentary democracy is not law but moral conscience of the majority in power", he affirmed.[32]

But his conception of morality was entirely different from Brahmin morality rooted in religion. He stressed that "morality springs from man's rationality. Since man is essentially rational therefore he is potentially moral."[33] "The reason in man is an echo of the harmony of the Universe. Morality must be referred back to man's innate rationality. Only then man can be moral, spontaneously and voluntarily. Reason is the only sanction for morality, which is an appeal to conscience, and conscience, in its turn, is the instinctive awareness of, and reaction to, environments."[34]

Roy believed that the brutalized Indian society can be uplifted by rational morality and man reestablished in his sovereign position. He said :

> "New Humanism claims to meet this greatest need of our time because it shows that a secular rational morality is possible. Once that is done, the necessity of human beings subordinating themselves to some super-human authority even for their moral behaviour disappears. Only then man will begin to feel his own authority, dignity and sovereignty. And only then will he voluntarily by his own reasoning as part of his social world, cooperate with Social relations will then become harmonious, because a rational morality will understand the motives of all and concede to all the rights which are claimed for every free, rational and moral individual. Then morality will be possible in public life and politics will cease to be a scramble for power in which the end justifies the means."[35]

In the opinion of Roy, freedom is no sentimental slogan or a chauvinistic creed nourished by religious or nationalistic prejudices. It is a positive concept. "Freedom is the progressive elimination of all factors—physical, social and psychological-which obstruct the unfolding of man's rational, moral and creative potentialities. The function of social relationships should be to secure for individuals as individuals, the maximum measure of freedom. The sum total of freedom actually enjoyed by its members individually is the measure."[36]

Between the mythical and abstract concept of nation and the reality of individual, Roy stood for the latter. He repeatedly stressed:

> "A political system and an economic experiment, which subordinate the man of flesh and blood to an abstract collective ego, cannot possibly be the suitable means for the attainment of the goal of freedom. It is absurd to argue that negation of freedom is road to freedom. The purpose of all rational human endeavour, collective as well as individual, should be the attainment of freedom in ever larger measure, and freedom is real only as individual freedom."[37]

How can a society of rational individuals be brought into being? Answering this vital question confronting humanity, Roy said:

> "In the first place, there must be a conscious and integrated effort to stimulate amongst the people the urge for freedom, the desire to rely upon themselves and to be makers of their destiny, the spirit of free thinking and the will never to submit to any external authority by exchanging their freedom for the security of slaves. A new Reniassance, based on rationalism, individualism and democracy is to be realised, capable of defending itself."[38]

This in nutshell is M. N. Roy's philosophy of freedom and his programme of action. It is qualitatively different from the ideology that was preached by Gandhi and the rest of the Congress leaders. It is opposed to revival of Brahminism and is therefore contrary to the teachings of the Gita and what the Mahatma stood for. Roy was no doubt an admirer of the Indian culture but it was other than the popular Vedanta; it was the philosophy of life as taught by the rationalist-materialist teachers of free-Gita age. Only he had refined, expanded and enriched the views of the ancient masters in the light of the scientific discoveries of modern times.

Soon after his release from imprisonment in 1936, Roy founded the weekly *Independent India* to preach his views. The first issue came out on April 4, 1937. After the country attained independence, the name of the journal was altered to *Radical Humanist*; it is now being published from Delhi as a monthly journal.

Roy's magnum opus *Philosophical Consequences of the Modern Science*, written in prison and left by him in manuscript form awaits publication. It is as much in the Greek tradition as in the ancient Indian rationalist tradition amplified by the latest theories of science. Some parts of it have been published under such titles as *Savagery to Civilisation*, *Science and Philosophy* and *Heresies of the Twentieth Century*. But the main work when available for study and discussion, is calculated to give an impetus to clearer thinking in this country.

Roy was dead set against Hindu nationalism. Soon after he joined the Congress in 1937 he had a talk at the Faizpur Session with the Mahatma who advised him to give up "un-Indian fads" and unreservedly accept the principles on which Indian nationalism had been reared. But Roy could not, for obvious reasons, oblige the Mahatma. Then word went round that the unyielding rationalist was to be ignored and regarded as a dangerous man; a whispering campaign was launched against him and Congressmen were forbidden to contact him. "Roy strikes at my very roots", tersely remarked Gandhi.

In contemporary history of India, Roy was the most clear-headed of thinkers and an uncompromising rationalist. When Hindu nationalism sucked in other secular democratic elements in the freedom stuggle, Roy stood firm on his ground and frequently warned that India was being led on wrong path by Gandhi and his disciples.

Roy's break with the Congress occurred with the outbreak of the Second World war in 1939. He believed that its "phoney" phase would soon end and that it would ultimately develop into a titanic clash between the world democratic forces on the one side and the Fascist powers on the other. And if the former won, India was bound to become free. Therefore, he held, that India should unconditionally support the British. With their characteristic anti-West outlook and total lack of farsight, the Congress leaders opposed the British Government laying one impossible condition after another for their co-operation in war efforts. Sedulously spread by the Gandhists, the view that victorious British would never liberate India was held by the Indian politicians of all hues throughout the war period. Typical Congress opinion was expressed

by Nehru when he said as late as 1945 that "the British governing class in England and in India is determined to hold on to what it had."[39] Only two years later the British, after wining the war, voluntarily withdrew and it showed the marked difference in the assessment of Roy and Nehru.

The anti-British propaganda of the Congress gave rise to pro-Fascist feelings in India which Roy deplored as suicidal because victory of anti-democratic axis would, he asserted, end all hopes of India's freedom. But Roy's advice was drowned in the nationalist din. Thereupon he and his followers left the Congress (or were driven out) and formed the Radical Democratic Party which whole-heartedly supported the Allies until the Fascists were completely routed in 1944.

Stephen N. Hay says that there were three distinct schools of thought among those of Hindu descent in India who had been most affected by contact with modern Western ideas. Tagore, Roy and Gandhi represented them; Nehru occupied an intermediate position within the triangle formed by these three. Tagore stood for the nineteenth century Hindu-British symbiosis; Gandhi represented the wholesale rejection of modern Western civilisation which Tagore disapproved. "The Third School, that of M.N. Roy, might be said to represent the advance in the twentieth century of a newer wave of modern Western influence on India, that of the anti-religious and staunchly materialist tradition of continental European Communism. His school of thought rejected the spiritual bases of both Tagore's and Gandhi's theories on Eastern civilisation and sought to achieve triumph of that modern Western materialism which both Tagore and Gandhi greatly feared."[40]

Roy was the man of Renaissance. But, frank and honest, as Beverly Nicholas observed in his book *Verdict on India*, he arrived late, too late, in India when Gandhi was completely in possession of the field and the views, however sound, of every Hindu opponent could be drowned in the mass religious hysteria that the satyagraha movement had generated. Idealists and rationalists like Roy were easier to vanquish. "Idealism has no place in politics", said Nehru, "which concerns itself with power and the opportune use of it."[41]

Unyielding in rational approach, saturated with materialist

philosophy and advocating non-conformist views and practices which cut at the roots of Hinduism, Roy had ill-chosen his path in joining the Congress after his release in 1936. Imbued with a revolutionary zeal and rare idealism, he was overenthusiastic and tended to ignore his own analysis of national politics and gullible nature of the Indians. In attempting the impossible task of converting the National Congress completely dominated by Gandhists, to his viewpoint he was trying for the moon. Realist par excellence, it is amazing that he thought he could perform a miracle.

Roy tried to be one among the Congressmen and even donned the *khadi* (handspun and handwoven) uniform which was a necessary condition to gain the right of being taken on the elective bodies of the Congress. He found his way into the All-India Congress Committee and even contested for Presidentship of the organisation. But he failed to penetrate into the hermetically sealed minds of the Gandhists. Everytime he presented a plan for the emancipation of India's toiling millions simultaneously from British Imperialism and Hindu obscurantism, it was derisively received and summarily turned down on the plea that it would change the course of Freedom Struggle and the Indian Society itself, in a different direction from the one in which the Mahatma and his disciples were leading them. On one such occasion this writer was present in 1938 in the Congress session as a visitor and was surprised to note the furious reactions that a lucidly drafted and cogently argued proposal of Roy evoked among Congressman, including Nehru.

Roy's parting with the Congress, as noted above, came soon after the outbreak of Second World War. He was disappointed, perhaps sad, that he should have wasted four years in the Congress. With cooperation of the few devoted rationalists, he next founded the Radical Democratic Party but still cherished the hope to muster progressive forces from among non-Congressmen and revive the Renaissance movement. Immediately he wanted to help the Allies to win the war. He gave a call for mobilization of all anti-fascist groups and individuals in public life. Hurrying came, along with a handful of honest democrats, a large number of pseudo-intellec-

tuals, half-baked revolutionaries, loyalists, careerists, opportunists etc. and rallied round the banner unfurled by him.

At the same time, however, Radicals accepted an offer of a subsidy of Rs. 13,000 per month from the Indian Government to arrange effective publicity for inducing the Indian labour, misled by Congressmen, to fully co-operate in maintaining production during the war period. A new organisation, Indian Federation of Labour, was formed. Soon it became a powerful body and in due course its membership rose to about a million.

Since there was identity of objective of defeating International Fascism there was nothing morally exceptionable or politically wrong in accepting the subsidy from the Government which was not given secretly but offered publicly to any body willing to cooperate in helping war work. But some of Roy's admirers have suggested that is was a tactical mistake because his opponents could, and did, dub the Radicals as paid agents of British Imperialism, inciting the frenzied populace against them. Nevertheless, undeterred Royists did yeoman service in putting labour on the right track until the Great War was won and World Democarcy saved from Fascist onslaught.

So long as the War lasted, the Radicals appeared to be advancing towards their goal of liberating the Indian people. For the time being it seemed the counterrevolution of Gandhism had been stemmed and India stood afresh on path of Enlightenment. But when the War ended and the British Government, captured by the Labour Party, renewed their policy of appeasing Hindu Nationalism the motley crowd of false progressives and false intellectuals vanished in thin air leaving Roy and the band of Radicals high and dry.

But Roy refused to own failure; he still pinned his hope on the educated enfranchised people. He advised RDP to jump into the arena of general elections in winter 1946 expecting to salvage some fruits of their strenuous labour. The outcome completely disillusioned Roy. Sheeplike the electorate, if Hindu, followed Gandhi and, if Muslim, Jinnah. Not one Radical candidate was returned at the polls to the Central or provincial legislatures. That was the measure

of people's prejudice forces of emancipation. A wise man now after the bitter experiences, Roy next decided to solely bend his energy for spreading rational doctrines and changing the religious mode of thinking of the people—the role for which he was cast by nature. On this we shall write later.

The case was different with Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, leader of Scheduled Castes Federation, and M.A. Jinnah, President of the Muslim League.

As caste-system is a fundamental tenet of Hindu religion, the British administrators in post-Mutiny period, did not curb it or try to eradicate its most vicious off-shoot-untouchability. But by the impact of Western culture the conscience of some reformers was stirred and they denounced it as an abomination. As already stated Jotibha Phooley started, in 1852, a school for the untouchables. In 1858 the Bombay Government announced that it reserved the right of refusing its support to any aided school in which "the benefits of education are withheld from any class of persons on account of caste or race." By the middle of the nineteenth century a section of the Hindus began to express disapproval of untouchabililty but no steps were taken to remove it. The Hindu revivalist leaders patronized the untouchables but denied them even the elementary human rights and were not at all prepared to make them equal with caste Hindus.

Then a brilliant star appeared in the untouchable firmament to expose the barbarities of the caste Hindus in their dealings with these God-forsaken millions.

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar was born on April 14, 1861, in the village Ambavadi in the Ratnagiri District to an untouchable Mahar family. Braving indescribable hardships and unendurable humiliations, he got himself educated in India and abroad earning a law degree and a doctorate. Even as a student he had decided to devote his life to the cause of liberating untouchables from the shackles forged for them by the caste Hindus. Early in 1920 he started to organise "the scum of Brahmin society" as the untouchables were contemptuously referred to. On Jannary 4, 1925 he founded the Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha (Assocation for the Welfare of the Excluded). Two years later in 1927 he started the

journal *Bahishkrit Bharat* (Excluded India) to describe the miseries and voice the suppressed feelings of the dumb humanity.

To start with, Ambedkar was not against Brahminism but he was determined to get the curse of untouchability totally removed from every sphere of Hindu social life. He could not brook the abasement of his brethren. This inevitably brought him into clash with caste Hindus who left no opportunity unutilized to suppress him physically and morally. But Ambedkar proved to be a hard nut to crack.

Having organized the untouchables to a considerable extent, he started agitations for achieving the most ordinary right of entering Hindu temples and using public tanks, wells and other places denied to the oppressed millions all over India. Everywhere the untouchables rallied round his banner. Thus he and his party came into limelight. However, the Congress, under Gandhi, tried to minimize his importance by not taking any notice of him.

When the Simon Commission arrived in India in 1927, Ambedkar submitted a memorandum to it demanding separate represention for the untouchables in the State and Central legislatures in the new constitutional set-up then under contemplation. He was invited, in 1930, by the British Government to participate in the First Round Table Conference as an accredited representative of the low caste Hindus. In London, he not only presented the case of untouchables with great ability but also enlightened the British public about the miserable condition of his brethren and the false claims of the Congress to represent them. This unnerved Gandhi and other Congress leaders. Ambedkar was invited to meet the Mahatma. But the interview proved fruitless because Gandhi told him: "I am against the political separation of untouchables from the Hindus."[42] Ambedkar was convinced that as part of the Hindu society the untouchables had no future.

It may appear incredible but it is true that Gandhi did not know that Ambedkar was a born untouchable and took him for a Brahmin renegade who fought for the rights of the low castes.[43] The reality dawned on the Mahatma when he

confronted the untouchable leader in the Second Round Table Conference (1931) where both were present as members. Ambedkar tried to be accommodating in reservation of seats for untouchables in a system of joint electorates for Hindus, both touchables and untouchables. But Gandhi opposed him tooth and nail declaring that untouchables were part and parcel of the Hindu society and could not have separate representation of any sort. Then Ambedkar, like members of other non-Hindu communities, demanded separate electorates and since he was backed by an over-whelming support of the untouchables in India, the British Government had to concede it. To the discomfiture of the Mahatma and other Congress leaders, Ambedkar by this success reached the zenith of his fame and emerged as the sole leader of the untouchable masses. Writing about Gandhi's role in the Round Table Conference, he said :

> "Unfortunately" the Congress chose Mr. Gandhi as its representative. A worse person could not have been chosen to guide India's destiny. As a unifying force he was a failure. Mr. Gandhi presents himself as a man full of humility. But his behaviour at the Round Table Conference showed that in the flush of victory M. Gandhi could be very petty-minded."[44]

The British Government's award granting separate electorate to the untouchables infuriated Gandhi but instead of becoming a realist, he resorted to his method of blackmail, "fasting unto death" thereby rousing the base emotions of caste Hindus against Ambedkar. But the indomitable champion of the untouchable cause was equally obstinate. "I am described as a traitor by Congress men", he told a mass meeting of untouchables in Bombay in January 1932, "because I opposed Gandhi. I am not at all perturbed by this charge. It is baseless, false and malicious. But it was a great shock to the world that Gandhi himself should have sponsored violent opposition to the breaking of your shackles. I am sure that the future generations of the Hindu will appreciate my services when they study the history of the Round Table Conference.''[45]

Finding an inveterate foe and an unconquerable spirit in Ambedkar, Gandhi ate the humble pie and accepted

reservation of seats for the Harijans with joint electorate for all Hindus. Ambedkar retraced a step and abandoned stress on separate electorates when the famous Poona Pact was signed on September 24, 1932. "My only regret is," commented Ambedkar, "why did not Mahatmaji take this attitude at the Round Table Conference. If he had shown the same consideration to my point of view then, it would not have been necessary for him to go through this ordeal."

Why was Ambedkar so adamant against Brahminism? In 1936 he told the Untouchable Youth Conference at Poona :

> "The religion that does not recognise you as human being, or give you water to drink, or allow you to enter the temples is not worthy to be called a religion. The religion that forbids you to receive education and comes in the why of your material advancement is not worthy of the appellation 'religion'. The religion that does not teach its followers to show humanity in dealing with its co-religionists is nothing but a display of force. The religion that asks its adherents to suffer the touch of animals but not the touch of human beings is not religion; the religion which precludes some classes from education, forbids them to accumulate wealth and to bear arms, is not religion but a mockery. The religion that compels the ignorant to be ignorant and the poor to be poor, is not religion but a visitation."[46]

In 1932 Gandhi launched a campaign to get Hindu temples opened for the Untouchables. But Ambedkar was not mollified. He was prepared to give Hinduism a chance, and pointing to the root cause of the evil, hit the nail on the head : "If the Hindu religion is to be the religion of social equality, then an amendment of its code to provide temple entry is not enough. What is required is to purge it of the doctrine of chaturvarnya. This is the root cause of all inequality and is also the parent of the caste system and untouchability which are merely other forms of inequality. Unless, it is done,the Depressed Classes will reject not only the temple entry but also the Hindu faith. For to accept the temple entry and be content with it, is to compromise with evil, and to barter away the sacredness of human personality that dwells in them."[46]

When all the colleagues of Ambedkar endorsed his views,

Gandhi came out with a statement in which he said : "I am a Hindu, not merely because I am born in the Hindu fold, but I am one by conviction and choice. There is not superiority or inferiority in the Hinduism of my conception. But when Dr. Ambedkar wants to fight varnashram itself, I cannot be in his camp, because I believe varnashram to be an integral part of Hinduism."[48]

It is remarkable that while Gandhi invariably advised people to depend on God, Ambedkar, consistently laid stress on self-reliance and self help. Addressing a meeting in Bombay in 1933 he counselled : "You must abolish your slavery yourselves. Do not depend for its abolition upon God or superman. Your salvation lies in political power and not in making pilgrimages and observance of fasts. Devotion to scriptures would not free you from your bondage, want and poverty. Your forefathers have been doing it for generations but there has been no respite nor even a slight difference in your miserable life in any way. Like your forefathers, you wear rage; like them you subsist on thrownout crumbs; like them you perish in utter slums and hovels; and like them you fall easy victims to diseases with a deathrate that rages among poultry. Your religious fasts, austerities and penances have not saved you from starvation."[49]

Ambedkar firmly told his followers: "The sooner you remove the foolish belief that your miseries were pre-ordained, the better. The thought that your poverty is an inevitability and is inborn and inseparable is entirely erroneous. Abandon this line of thought of considering yourselves to be slaves."[50]

As early as 1927, a conference of untouchables held at Mahad under Ambedkar's presidentship "repudiated the authority of all the ancient and modern Hindu scriptures that teemed with the doctrines of social inequality and reiterated its opposition to applying these scriptures to the present social order."[51] In the course of this conference to demonstrate the intensity of feelings on the subject, the *Manu-Smriti* (Code of Manu) was placed on a bier and ceremoniously burnt by Ambedkar in the presence of thousands of untouchables.

To the Congress leaders who told him that since the majority of Hindus believed in the caste system it was not easy to

eradicate it, Ambedkar's reply was forthright : "Sin and immorality cannot become tolerable because a majority is addicted to them or because the majority chooses to practise them. If untouchability is a sinful and immoral custom in the view of the Depressed Classes it must be destroyed without any hesitation even if it was acceptable to the majority. This is the way in which all customs are dealt with by courts of law if they find them to be immoral and against public policy."[52]

Whether as concession to prevailing Hindu prejudice or due to inadequate study of the Bhagavad-Gita, Ambedkar ascribed the origin of his philosophy to the holy poem, and citing examples from it, he said in 1927 that the scripture "was acceptable to both the touchables and untouchables." But with greater experience and more knowledge he arrived at the decision that all Brahmin scriptures without exception were vicious. In a thesis on varnashrama dharma addressed to the Jat Pat Torak Mandal in 1936 he declared : "The real enemy is the *shastras* (scriptures) which teach them (Hindus) this religion of caste. Destroy this belief in the sanctity of the *shastras* (including the Gita). Destroy the authority, the sacredness and divinity of the *shastras* and the *Vedas*."

This process of thinking led Ambedkar ultimately to denounce the Hindu religion itself. At Jalgaon he had, in 1929, advised the untouchables "to embrace any other religion that would regard them as human beings, give them an opportunity to rise in the world and enable them to act, eat, walk and live like men."

Ambedkar realised that he had been outwitted in accepting joint electorates for Hindus, including the untouchable. With their overwhelming numbers caste Hindus manipulated to send only such untouchables to the legislatures who obeyed the Congress leaders and did not represent the interests of the outcastes. The candidates, opposed by the Congress, who secured high votes of the untouchables were mostly defeated at the polls. Ambedkar felt hurt and sore at the hostile attitude to the caste Hindus.

The British Government however recognised Ambedkar's talent by nominating him as Labour Member of the Viceroy's executive council during the days of the Second World war.

Opposing the views of Congressmen, Ambedkar supported Government's War efforts and offered unconditional assistance to win the War. "It was a war", he observed, "between dictatorship and democracy, a dictatorship based not on any moral order but on racial arrogance. Nazism was a menace to the future of Man, and so it was their duty to see that democracy did not vanish from the face of the earth as a governing principle of human relationship. They should, therefore, strive along with other democratic countries to maintain the basis of democratic civilisation." "If democracy dies", he concluded, "it will be their doom." He had thus come very close to the stand adopted from the very start of the War by the Radical Democratic Party under the leadership of M.N. Roy.

Essentially a rebel Ambedkar could not rid his mind of religious tendencies. His prayers to an unseen power which he used to say daily were at variance with the theory of self-reliance and rational doctrines which he taught throughout his life. Having decided to renounce Hinduism he trifled for many years with several faiths but ultimately chose Mahayana Buddhism which he, along with hundreds of thousands of his followers, embraced before his death in 1956.

A Shia Muslim by birth, M. A. Jinnah was called to the Bar in London where he profited by a study of liberal ideas and European life during the period of his stay. On return to his homeland he entered public life as a young politician in Bombay. Starting his career as Private Secretary to Dadabhai Naoroji in 1906 he rose to flourish as one of the foremost lawyers and statesmen of the Indian subcontinent. An admirer of secular democracy he grew indifferent to religion. He married a Parsi girl who died young but Jinnah did not take a second wife devoting solely his life to public affiairs.

Modern in outlook, nationalist by conviction, Jinnah was in his life known as the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity. He had earnestly and devotedly laboured for India's freedom as a worker of the Home Rule under Annie Besant. Elected as a member of Imperial Legislative Council for many years he resigned in protest in 1919 against promulgation of Rowlatt Act. But he was a staunch costitutionalist and believed in

peaceful transfer of power from British imperialists to Indian nationalists.

When in 1920 Gandhi invited prominent politicians to join his satyagraha movement some of them including Annie Besant, C.R. Das, M.M. Malaviya, B.C. Pal and M.A. Jinnah, Jinnah declined to do so. Jinnah told Gandhi : "I thank you for your kind suggestion offering me to take my share in the new life that has opened up before the country. If by 'new life' you mean your methods and your programme, I am afraid I cannot accept them for I am fully convinced that it must lead to disaster."[53]

Remaining steadfast as a nationalist, Jinnah closely observed the outcome of the non-cooperation movement noting how Gandhi swept the Hindu community off its feet and enveloped the country in a hysteria of irrational sentimentalism and anti-West emotionalism.

In two long interviews which I had with Jinnah in May 1944 in Srinagar, he unburdened himself and related to me the poignant experiences which he made when his modern ideas and patriotic feeling clashed with those of the nationalist Hindus under Gandhi's leadership. It drove him, he told me, to function gradually and inevitably as a Muslim in the political field. Maulana Azad has recorded : "It was largely due to Gandhiji's acts of commission and omission that Mr. Jinnah regained his importance in Indian political life. In fact it is doubtful if Mr. Jinnah could have achieved supremacy but for Gandhiji's attitude."[54]

Jinnah arrived at the painful conclusion that he could fight Hindu militancy to safeguard Muslim interests with the same weapons with which Gandhi had armed himself and his followers. To combat Hindu nationalism he bent his energy to rear Muslim nationalism by rousing mob fanaticism and anti-British slogans. But Jinnah did not abandon indifference to religion in his private life; he even disallowed it to interfere with his politics. When Sheikh Abdullah invited him to preside over an Id Milad meeting which Kashmir Muslim Conference held in 1938 in Srinagar, he refused the invitation and told the Kashmir leader that he was mistaken to count him as a

religious enthusiast. "I am a politician and not a mulla or a Muslim bigot", he impressed upon Abdullah.

Earlier, feeling frustrated and dismayed, Jinnah left India in 1932 to practise in London before the Privy Council, for he could not stand the unbearable scenes of mass hysteria and murder of reason. But four years later he saw the chance of his life to thwart Gandhi's adventure, and he returned to India.

In 1927, the British Government had, in pursuance of their policy of "progressive realisation of Responsible Government in India", constituted a Royal Commission presided over by Sir John Simon, to collect data for taking another step in this direction. The other members of the Commission were C. R. (later Earl) Attlee, Lords Burnham and Strathcona, E.C.G. Cadogam, C. R. Lane-Fox and Vernon Hartshorn. Because there was no Indian among the members, the Congress boycotted the Commission and completely non-cooperated with it. Commission was followed by three Round Table Conferences and various Joint Parliamentary Committees which enabled the British Government to adopt a new Government of India Act in 1935, giving the Indian complete autonomy in the provincial sphere. The Act also laid outlines of a federal structure for the Central Government which calculated to preserve and maintain the unity and integrity of the Indian subcontinent after the end of British rule.

With the enforcement of Government of India Act (1935) the Congress governments though subject to Governor's advice, were free to rule over the people as they liked. It brought out the true nature of Hindu revivalism which was hidden for twenty years behind the deceptive and revolutionary slogans raised at Congress sessions. Muslims, as we know, had been progressively alienated from the Congress since the days of Tilak. Now there was open break between the Hindus and the Muslims, the latter accusing the former of utilising political power as the majority ruling party to suppress the minority. It created the opportunity that Jinnah was waiting for and he dexterously exploited it.

In the early thirties few Congressmen believed that the elegant Westernised lawyer in his neat Bond Street tailored

dress, accustomed to move only in fashionable society could rally multitudes of Muslims round himself and become a menace to the Hindu nationalist movement. Yet they were to learn to their cost the power of tactical skill and the power to inspire loyalty and impose discipline that Jinnah possessed. Despite an impassive face, the superficial geniality and the slow and measured voice with its exact articulation he showed that he had the ability to stir the masses no less than that of Gandhi.

Soon after the promulgation of the 1935 Act, Jinnah returned from London to voice the urges of the Muslims—their sense of separateness, of fear and of urgency. He took over the almost moribund Muslim League and set about uniting all sections of Muslims under its banner. He created a political creed and an ideology which were not new but were presented in a new garb.

In the 1937 provincial elections the League fared only moderately not having been able to secure a majority even in one provincial legislative council. Jinnah therefore played his role in a low key. He announced his willingness to work in coalition with Congress ministries. But the Congress with assured majorities in six provinces disdainfully declined the offer. This was a bitter blow to Jinnah who felt humiliated. He never trusted the Congress leaders again and resolved that the only way to deal with them was to obstruct their every move. Throughout the rest of his life he became increasingly implacable and obstinate.

In his note on Nehru inserted in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Dr. S. P. Sen, Director of the Institute of Historical Studies, says that Nehru's indiscretion and lack of political foresight led to partition of India.

Sen believes Nehru threw away "a chance of communal harmony" in 1937 when the Muslim league had proposed a coalition government with the Congress in the provinces. Nehru, as president of the Congress, "thoughtlessly spurned that offer and demanded the virtual liquidation of the Muslim League." It was a grave political blunder, observes Sen, which eventually strengthened the League and encouraged it to demand the

partition of this country. Nehru also opposed to have a coalition government in Bengal between the Congress Party and Krishak Praja Party of Fazlul Haque. Then K. P. P. joined hands with the Muslim League. Thus Nehru threw away the Muslim majority provinces—Bengal and Punjab—into the arms of the Muslim League.

Dr. Sen laments : "The political destiny of India would have been shaped in an entirely different way if Nehru had shown more political maturity and accommodating spirit, hoping for a real rapprochement between the two major communities in India. But Nehru could not rise to the occasion."[55] Maulana Azad has expressed a similar view taking Nehru to task for being influenced by Purshottamdas Tandon in making the wrong judgement "which ultimately led to Pakistan."[56]

Conceited behaviour, tactless statements and imprudent actions of Congressmen in the ministries formed after the elections in the provinces, provided welcome material to Jinnah of which he made the fullest use. He created a psychosis of fear among the Muslims. To the upper classes he preached the need of national independence, the untrustworthiness of the Hindus and the reality of the Muslims as a separate nation. Muslims were culturally and socially, he used constantly to emphasize, a different people who could never accept Hindu rule. For the masses he created a bogey in the shape of their Hinduization and danger to Islam. His tremendous success in the campaign within a few years was amazing. This became clear when on the resignation of Congress ministries in 1939 he asked the Muslims to observe a Thanks Giving Day and the response was enthusiastic. Next year in March 1940 came the proclamation that achievement of Pakistan, a separate state composed of Muslim-majority provinces, was the goal of Muslim League.

Walking in the footsteps of the Mahatma, Jinnah roused the vulgar passions and base religious sentiments of his co-religionists. He created a hysteria no less wide-spread among the Muslims than the one Gandhi had generated in the Hindus. When Gandhi asked the British to "quit India," in 1942, Jinnah advised them to "divide (India) and quit."

Even with their resourcefulness and effective instruments of propaganda to combat the rising tide of Muslim nationalism, the Hindu leaders failed to break the power of Jinnah and his Muslim League which suddenly became a force to be reckoned with. Jinnah revived and amplified the theory that India consisted of two nations—Hindu and Muslim—which had been adumbrated by Sir Syed Ahmed in the eighties of the last century. In the general elections of 1946 the Muslim League swept the polls in the Muslim constituencies which glaringly revealed the fact that the Congress had lost even the smallest influence among the Muslims in the country.

If Gandhi had created the Hindu giant of fanaticism by exciting religious passions, Jinnah gave birth to the Muslim monster of fanaticism by the same means. The two titans were facing each other with bloodshot eyes ready to pounce. Innumerable clashes took place while negotiations were going on between the British Government and the Indian leaders for transfer of power in 1945-47. It led directly to the partition of the country on religious basis when independence was achieved in August 1947. With the consent of the Congress leaders the unity of the Indian subcontinent (the greatest achievement of the British Rule) was broken and a new Muslim State of Pakistan was carved out.

To frustrate Gandhi's aim and earn acceptance of the backward Muslims, Jinnah in his advanced age abandoned fashionable Western style of living, at any rate in the public, donned achkan and shalwar, mingled with the masses and bore other discomforts of average Indian life. He addressed large audiences in broken Urdu which he picked up in haste. But these were mere pretensions countenanced to achieve a definite purpose. In fact Jinnah had imbibed faith neither in communalism nor in demagogy. Having reached height of power and pinnacle of glory at the partition of the subcontinent while addressing on August 14, 1947, the inaugural session of the Pakistan Constitutent Assembly, he declared :

> "We are starting the State with no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, between caste and creed. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one

> state. We shall keep that in front of us our ideal... Hindus will cease to be Hindus and Muslims will cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense because that is a personal faith with each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the Nation."

An astounding statement indeed from one who had won his battle against Hindu nationalism mainly by rousing religious emotions and communal passions for over a decade.

Jinnah died in 1948 only one year after the establishment of Pakistan.

Disowned by the rationalists, the untouchables and the Muslims, Gandhi was cut to size as the leader of upper caste Hindus and a spokesman of Brahminism or Hindu nationalism as it began to be called in contemporary times.

37

Triumph of Hindu Nationalism (iii)

THE rise of Jinnah as *Quaide Azam* (Great Leader) of Muslims in the early forties unbalanced Gandhi. For half a century he had preached truth and non-violence as the two principles of his life. He had read them in every verse and canto of the Gita. But when in 1940 the Muslim League adopted the achievement of Pakistan as its goal, the apostle of the twin-principle became impatient. He threw non-violence to winds. On May 24, 1942, addressing the British, he asked them to "leave India in God's hands, in modern parlance, to anarchy and that anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for a time or to unrestrained dacoities. From these a true India will arise in place of the false one we see."[1] On 7th June he frankly admitted : "I waited and waited until the country should develop the non-violent strength necessary to throw off the foreign yoke. But my attitude has now undergone a change. I feel that I cannot afford to wait. If I continue to wait I might have to wait till doomsday."[2] Regarding communal unity he wrote earlier in the *Harijan* on June 15, 1940 : "It is an illusion created by ourselves that we must come to an agreement with all parties before we can make any progress."[3]

The bellicose mood of the Mahatma led to violent rebellion in August 1942 known as the Quit India Movement. The

programme of action formulated by the All-India Congress Committee to run an underground agitation (the Congress having been declared an unlawful association) contained, among other items, the following : "Roads and telegraphs and railways to be destroyed to defeat the British Military." As one of the top leaders of the movement, Jayaprakash Narayan, the best-known disciple of the apostle of non-violence, interpreting the latest philosophy of the Master and the Congress programme, announced : "Dislocation is an infallible weapon for the people under slavery... cutting wires, removing of railway lines, blowing up of bridges, stoppage of factory work, setting fire to oil tanks as also to *thanas*, destruction of government papers and files—all such activities come under dislocation and it is perfectly right for people to carry out these."[4]

Notwithstanding repudiation of the principle of communal non-violence and resort to harmony and destruction on widest—possible scale by Congressmen, the British Government was able to crush the Quit India movement within a few weeks. "It practically collapsed before the end of September 1942", writes R. C. Majumdar : "This was clearly recognized by the Congress itself in an appeal issued by the AICC towards the end of September 1942...The Congress had fired its last shot and missed. The battle was lost."[5]

But the failure of satyagraha or the impatience of Gandhi did not influence the thinking of the British statesmen nor did they swerve from the path they had followed for over a century.

Even when the tide in the Second World War turned in their favour causing gloom and dismay in Hindu nationalist circles, the British Government delegated two missions namely, Cripps Mission (1942) and British Cabinet Missions (1946) to India to secure an understanding between the Congress and the Muslim League about the future of free India in order to handover power to responsible hands and leave the country in peace. But both the Missions failed in their endeavours. An impartial student of history is lost in amazement to find by a close study of the voluminous reports of discussions and correspondence which took place between the members of the Missions and the Indian leaders (of all creeds and different shades

of opinion) how solicitous the British were to keep India united but the leaders in their vanity created conditions which ended in disintegration of the subcontinent.

Nehru messed up another chance in 1947, wrote, S. P. Sen, Director of the Institute of Historical Studies, during the constitutional negotiations which preceded the transfer of power, for a settlement with the Muslim League and the preservation of India's unity under the Cabinet Mission Plan. "Nehru told a press conference that once in power the Congress would use its strength at the Centre to alter the Cabinet Mission Plan as it thought fit." Sen considers this "a direct act of sabotage." "Whether he meant it to be so, in the mistaken belief that Jinnah and Muslim league were not really a force to be reckoned with, or whether they were the ham-handed remarks of a politician who did not know when to keep his mouth shut, will never be known." Sen goes on to say that Nehru possibly felt convinced that the British were so eager to quit India immediately that they would not hesitate to throw the Muslim League overboard and handover power to the Congress alone. "He hardly knew Jinnah and his political potentialities." But after the orgy of communal violence spread with Jinnah's call for *direct action* on August 16, 1946, Nehru, was panicked into an immediate acceptance of the demand for Pakistan, Sen concludes his remarks on Nehru in the third volume of the *Directory of National Biography*: "History can hardly spare the man who played with a nation's destiny in such a thoughtless and indiscreet manner."[6]

Maulana Azad, Congress President, was displeased with Nehru's unwarranted interpretation of the Cabinet Mission Plan. "The acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan by both Congress and Muslim League", he wrote, "was a glorious event in the history of freedom movement in India...We rejoiced but did not then know that our joy was premature and bitter disappointment awaited us."[7] The disappointment was caused by Nehru's provocative statements in the press conference, in Bombay. "Jawaharlal's mistake in 1937", lamented Azad, "had been bad enough. The mistake of 1946 proved even more costly."[8]

Assessing the causes of the failure of the Cabinet Delegation, Lord Archibald Wavell, then Viceroy of India, about whose

sincerity, straight forwardness, integrity of purpose Maulana had no doubts,[9] wrote in his *Diary* on June 30, 1946 :

> "I think at the root of the failures lay the fact that H. M. G. (His Majesty's Government) and the Delegation never had any definite basic plan; and so could never keep the initiative... I still believe that a firmer, more masculine attitude would not only have been more befitting a great people, but would have paid a better dividend...It was quite wrong for the Mission to have had such constant contacts with the Congress camp, and especially with Gandhi. They put exaggerated faith and belief in him and showed him absurd deference."

The Viceroy went on to record :

> "Gandhi ran true to form and was the real wrecker. His one idea for 40 years has been to overthrow British rule and influence and to establish a Hindu raj : and he is as unscrupulous as he is persistent. He has brought to a fine art the technique of vagueness and of never making a statement which is not somehow so qualified or worded, that he cannot be pinned down to anything definite. His practice of mixing prayers with politics, or rather of making prayers of a medium of political propaganda, is all a part of the makeup. He is an exceedingly shrewd, obstinate, domineering, double-tongued, single-minded politician; and there is little true saintliness in him."[10]

Undaunted by failures, the British Government took the final step in the fulfilment of their rule in India. With becoming grace and dignity they performed the culminating act when on February 20, 1947, Clement Attlee, Prime Minister, made the historic pronouncement in the House of Commons :

> "His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that it is their definite intention to take necessary steps to effect transference of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June, 1948."[11]

Commenting on this declaration Majumdar observed : "It was a direct challenge to Indian statesmanship, and particularly to Gandhi and Nehru, who never ceased to harp upon the idea that all the communal troubles, were due to the presence of the British. Now that the British had stated in unequivocal terms that they would quit India by the month of June 1948,

Gandhi and Nehru and the Congress had a splendid opportunity to prove their oft-repeated theory. It was put to a crucial test and failed miserably."[12]

During the period of negotiations with the British authorities, Gandhi's behaviour was such as to lay him open to the charge that his regard for non-violence or truth which he used to frequently profess as his cherished principles was not high. In the early days of Second World War when Democracies were going under, he stubbornly rejected the proposal of India joining the War on the side of Democracies because, he argued, it would mean India giving up non-violence. He believed that Fascism would emerge triumphant and liberate India and felt least worried that modern civilisation and Western culture would be destroyed. He was not sorry at the prospect but rather welcomed it. But when later on in 1944 the victory of the Allies came in sight he unblushingly agreed that India could participate in the War. Wrote Maulana Azad : "Gandhiji at that time (in early days of the War) had taken the stand that political independence of India was no doubt important but adherence to non-violence was even more important. His declared policy was that if the only way of achieving independence was to participate in the war, he for one would not adopt it. Now (in 1945) he said that Congress could cooperate with the British if India was declared free. This was complete reversal of his earlier views..."[13]

Nor Gandhi did stick always to the truth when faced with a perplexing situation. On March 3, 1947, he told Maulana Azad : "If the Congress wishes to accept partition, it will be over my dead body. So long as I am alive, I will never agree to the partition of India. Nor will I, if I can help it, allow Congress to accept it."[14] But the Congress leaders hungry for power, realised that unless the plan drawn and authoritatively published by Lord Mountbatten, the last British Viceroy, on June 3, 1947, envisaging the creation of Pakistan was accepted India would be unable to achieve freedom soon. Therefore, a resolution accepting the plan was prepared by the Congress Working Committee for adoption by the All-India Congress Committee. There was tension and passions rose high when the resolution was discussed. Some members characterised

the resolution as "downright surrender to brute force and violence." Then, lo and behold, Gandhi intervened and strongly urged the acceptance of the resolution recognising India's division.[15] "Our national organization had taken a decision", Recorded Azad, in favour of partition but the entire people grieved over it...The people of India had not accepted partition. In fact, their hearts and souls rebelled against the very idea."[16]

Too late in the day, Gandhi began to dimly realize the disastrous implications of his faulty approach to Hindu-Muslim problem and his tactics emanating from it. In his monumental work, the *Transfer of Power*, V. P. Menon quotes the Mahatma as mournfully confessing : "The British Government is not responsible for partition. The Viceroy has no hand in it. In fact, he is opposed to division as the Congress itself. But if both of us, Hindus and Muslims, cannot agree on anything else, then the Viceroy is left with no choice."

India became free from foreign domination in 1947, not as is frequently claimed, because the Congress leaders utilised satyagraha technique in the struggle against the British rule, but owing to various other reasons, at least four of which are worthy of mention. First, the British rulers, inspired by the democratic institutions and egalitarian traditions of their homeland from the early days of their conquest of India, considered it to be their historic mission to prepare the Indians for self-government and liberate them in the fullness of time. Secondly, for over four decades the Indians were properly educated and given thorough training in running the administration and managing the constitutional system of government introduced by the British. Thirdly, the two world wars completely changed the conception of good human relationship discrediting the philosophy of Imperialism as anachronistic and establishing the theory that international peace can be secured only by liberating all subject nations. And, fourthly, the progressive industrialisation of India eroded the economic basis of British Imperialism and even the diehard tories realized that it was beneficial for Britain to convert the subject nation into a friendly ally as Lord Macaulay had envisioned over a century before.

At the time of Independence, India was involved in a fratricidal socio-religious war ; Hindus butchering the Muslims and vice versa; there was destruction, carnage and bloodshed on a large scale.

Though Mahatma Gandhi's three fondly held principles of truth, non-violence and unity of India lay in shambles, he was eminently successful in having discredited Western rational culture and the British nation in the eyes of his countrymen. He could also derive the fullest satisfaction that the power in residual India, that is Bharat, had fallen into the hands of the Hindu Revivalists.

Emulating Medatithi, the eminent Brahmin lawgiver of the medieval times, Mahatma Gandhi had written in *Hind Swaraj* : "If the English become Indianized, we can accommodate them. If they wish to remain in India along with their civilisation there is no room for them. It lies with us to bring about such a state of things."[17] When it was pointed out to him that non-Hindus cannot give up their own culture and traditions and it was impossible that Englishmen could ever renounce their mode of life to be Hinduised, he replied emphatically : "It is really beside the point whether they become so or not. If we keep our own house in order, only those who are fit to live in it will remain. Others will leave of their own accord."[18] Unfortunately this attitude of intolerance towards non-Hindus became a characteristic feature of Indian nationalism, and as we shall see, has impeded the growth of true democracy in India.

India witnessed religious intolerance bordering on savagery in 1947; it reached its apogee after Independence. According to an estimate not probably exaggerated, besides destruction of property worth hundreds of crores, 60,00,00 Indians were butchered and 14,00,00,00 lost their homes in the communal frenzy. Nearly forty thousand girls and young women were abducted. Aghast at the massacres which he could not believe to be an outcome of his own philosophy, the Mahatma frequently condemned fanaticism and called for friendliness towards the Muslims who were running away from Bharat as the Hindus were fleeing from Pakistan. Gandhi's passionate pleas fell on deaf ears and were brusquely rejected by those Hindus who had imbibed the teachings of the *Hind-Swaraj* and the

Bhagavad-Gita. The Mahatma was hoisted with his own petard. "All my work of a lifetime has been entirely ruined", he confessed on January 3, 1948, in a talk with Sri Prakash, one of his devotees.[19]

When a scientific spirit comes to prevail in India as it must, sooner or later, future generations will feel aghast and hardly believe that a man like Gandhi, anti-enlightenment, anti-modernism, anti-science and fanatical in his beliefs, could hypnotize millions of their forebears and make them dance to his tune for nearly three decades in the twentieth century.

During the heyday of his glory Gandhi had frequently expressed his wish to live a long life and prophesied that he was destined to enjoy the hundred years (*shardam shatam*) allotted to virtuous men by the sages of the Vedic Age. But when India was burning in flames of religious fanaticism before and after the partition, he lost zest for life, felt dejected and often cried that he had no desire to live any longer. Then "mercifully" a Hindu fanatic, Nathuram Godse, assassinated him in the presence of hundreds of his devotees in the garden of the Birla House in New Delhi on January 30, 1948, while he was proceeding to participate in the evening prayer meeting. The end was not unlike that of Sri Krishna who while brooding over his inglorious past was killed by the hunter, Jara.

Godse standing in front of the Mahatma, fired at point blank range three shots in quick succession at him. The attack was so unexpected, sudden and savage that the rickety old man fell down and collapsed without being able to utter a word and died instantaneously. Next day a mali of the Birla House garden, narrating his story of the tragic incident, stated that as the Mahatma succumbed he uttered the words *Hai Ram.* The zealous Hindu followers lost no time in clutching at the report of doubtful authenticity as proof of Gandhi's spiritual greatness and love of dharma; even at the time of gruesome assassination, it was held, the martyr remembered nothing else but the sacred name of the Hindu avatar.

The world was shocked to hear of the assassination of the Mahatma. A light has gone out lamented the well wishers of humanity. Even his bitter critic Lord Wavell opined that by any standard Gandhi was a great man.

Were the British happy with such ending of their two-century rule? On August 14,1947, Lord Mountbatten in a message of greetings to the two sovereign legislatures of India and Pakistan said : "On the historic day when India/Pakistan take her place as a free and independent Dominion in the British Commonwealth of Nations I send you all my greetings and heartfelt wishes. With this transfer of power by consent comes the fulfilment of a great democratic ideal, to which the British and Indian and Pakistani peoples alike are firmly dedicated." This did not fully represent the feelings of the British. When on February 20, 1947, Attlee made the historic pronouncement to end British rule in India, several voices uttered the harsh truth. Viscount Templewood moved in the Parliament that the British Government's decision "under conditions which appear to be in conflict with previous declarations of the Government on this subject, and without any provisions for the protection of the minorities or discharge of their obligations is likely to imperil the peace and prosperity of India." He described Attlee's statement as "unconditional surrender at the expense of many of whom we have given specific pledges for generations past which would lead to division of India under worst possible circumstances." Lord Simon was more forthright : "I sadly fear that the end of this business is not going to be establishment of peace in India, but rather that is going to degrade the British name." Lord Halifax, a supporter of India's freedom and Attlee's Government, admitted that "truth is that for India today there is no solution that is not fraught with the greatest objection, with the gravest danger." Gandhi's great admirer, Pethick Lawrence, made the significant revelation that "the British rule cannot be maintained on its existing basis with adequate efficiency beyond 1948."[20]

The wisest statesman of the twentieth century, Winston Churchill, tersely remarked, that "we are handing over India to men of straw." He had for over two decades consistently opposed giving freedom to India so long as caste Hindus led the struggle and communal issue was not amicably settled. He had questioned not only the bona fides of the Congress stalwarts but also their ability and honesty to rule over the country. He had frequently warned that bloodshed and anarchy would

follow if power was transferred prematurely into ill-equipped and irresponsible hands. But Churchill was considered a back number by the Labour Party who defeated the Conservatives in the 1945 British general elections. His was therefore a voice in the wilderness. Yet, alas, how prophetic he proved to be.

In winding up the Parliamentary debate, Prime Minister Attlee emphasized that "the dangers of delay, the dangers of hanging on, were as great as the dangers of going forward." That was the pass to which India had been brought by the frightened British administrators and demoralised politicians by adopting a policy of patronizing Hindu revivalists after the departure of Lord Curzon in the early years of the twentieth century.

On August 15, 1947, British rule came to an end in the Indian subcontinent and with it the foreign domination over the country ceased. But to say that it was victory of Indian democracy would be a perversion of facts. What actually happened was that the rulership relinquished by the British was regained by the votaries of neo-Brahminism after a thousand years. It was a triumph of Hindu nationalism. "The mantle of British rule", says Michael Edwardes, "fell upon those who had learned most from the West, upon an elite almost as remote from the mass of people as the administrators they replaced. Essentially, the freedom movement—Congress and the Muslim League—were not mass parties, despite the fact that Gandhi had given the Congress the appearance of being so. Because of Gandhi, the British believed that the struggle for freedom was firmly based upon the mass following of Congress. But did Congress in fact have a mass following ? Certainly, Gandhi had demonstrated that the peasant could be manipulated for political purposes, but so too had religious extremists and, on a criminal level, so had the gangsters who incited mobs so that they could profit from the loot. Because India was so large and her population so vast, the numbers of those who could be called upon for action were too large, too. A Congress membership of four million appears immense in terms of English political parties, but that number is small when it is related to the four hundred million or so of India's population."[21] Examining the caste background of Congress

members, Edwardes says: "Most of the leadership during the freedom struggle and after independence came from the higher castes of Indian society. In fact, Congress organisation seemed, and still seems, to favour the traditional Indian-dominant classes, even if their representatives are disguised behind a Western veneer."[22]

It was a cruel irony that the British liberals who had set their mind on uniting India and fostering secular and progressive forces in the subcontient to whom they could handover power before relinquishing their grave charge, should have ultimately deemed it fit to partition the country and instal tradition-bound and reactionary Hindus and Muslims in power in the two parts. As we shall see presently, the change produced a baneful influence on the course of events in both Bharat and Pakistan. What was worse, it set a pattern for the emancipation of other enslaved peoples in Asia and Africa.

38

Under the Congress Raj (i)

THE influence of the Bhagavad-Gita on Indian life has perhaps been the most pronounced and palpable after Independence; yet, strangely, few students of contemporary affairs have been able to notice it. That the ugly moral and economic crisis in which India is involved to-day is born of the Gita teachings which are reverenced and translated in life by high and low, seems inconceivable to even the best of the Hindu intellectuals.

As during the Freedom Struggle so in the past twenty-seven years, Congress leaders have been actuated in every sphere of national life—social, cultural, political and economic—by the holy scripture. All their schemes and activities are consciously or unconsciously set in tune with the Gita-spirit; the Gita-style is the national-style : loud acclamation of reason, knowledge, peace, human brother-hood and social justice; at the same time, defiance in practice of these very principles whenever need arises to defend or expand the stagnant Brahmin system. Double talk and double think is the characteristic of Indian life. With noisy slogans of socialism, democracy and secularism Congressmen are leading India inevitably and inexorably to the same state of chaos as was witnessed for many centuries after the appearance of the Bhagavad-Gita and its acceptance as "friend, philosopher and guide" by the people.

In the brief survey made in this and the following three chapters I do not presume to shed light on all sides of the Congress rule which, properly, is the work of a historian. My specific and limited purpose is to produce facts and figures to show that India's sufferings and miseries stem from the religious mode of thinking advocated by the Gita and popularised by the Brahmins whose instrument in contemporary India is Congress nationalism.

Appropriately, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru assumed charge of the administration as the first Prime Minister of independent India at the unearthly hour of midnight on August 15, 1947, because Brahmin astrologers had declared that the daytime was inauspicious for doing so. The ceremony was performed with age-old Hindu rituals accompanied by chanting of Vedic mantras and other sacred texts. How insincere was the denunciation of astrology and religious rituals by Nehru throughout his life. Be that as it may, it was surely not a hopeful start for a secular state which the Congress leaders professed to establish.

In an atmosphere surcharged with excitement and tension, Nehru addressed the members of the Constituent Assembly: "At the stroke of the midnight hour", he spoke exultantly, "when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger call of unity." He grandiloquently named the occasion India's "tryst with destiny."

The jubilation of having achieved independence was marred by widespread communal disturbances and massacres in north and east India. Nehru and his colleagues faced the frightening situation with courage, determination and understanding bringing it under control within a few months. At times, disregarding grave personal risks, the Prime Minister broke into the rings of furious Hindu fanatics in Delhi and saved the lives of many helpless Muslims about to be butchered. He became the champion of the minorities who looked upto him for

protection, justice and fair treatment in the new State. Having suffered political imprisonment for over nine years in the aggregate, Nehru had graduated with flying honours from the school of national distinction. Beloved of the younger generation, favoured lieutenant and heir of Gandhi, he was the patron-saint of secular Bharat. Gandhi's assassination, on January 30, 1948, had made him the sole arbiter of India's destiny. He had the historical opportunity to direct the country on sound lines.

A Westerner in outlook, non-communal by conviction and cosmopolitan by nature who disclaimed being Hindu and disliked being called Pandit, he was, on the advent of Independence, acceptable to all sections of progressive thinking in India. He possessed a robust and a magnetic personality which charmed, attracted and commanded. But he was peevish, irascible and impatient, worse still, he was intolerant of dissent and liked to be surrounded by flunkeys and flatterers.

Nehru remained involved in mental confusion caused by diverse pulls of materialist and Brahmin cultures till the end of his life. Although a great admirer of social democracy and modern science, he could never rid his mind of the deceptive greatness of India's Brahmin past and, indeed, at times was frightened by the idea of severing the country's links with the hoary traditions. Thus, he continued to hover between his keen desire to promote modern scientific revolution and anxiety to preserve caste-ridden Hinduism which had smothered India's soul for fifteen hundred years, deprived the people of social progress and induced them to accept subjugation of foreigners.

Nothing can illustrate Nehru's confusion better than the contradictory statements he made in a paper entitled *India : Today and Tomorrow* which he read before a select gathering of intellectuals on February 22, 1959, after he had ruled over the country for twelve years. "There is no future for us without science and technology", he affirmed. "At the same time that future would be shallow and empty without any real meaning if we ignore or forget our past."[1] "To deny the past and break with it completely is to uproot ourselves and sapless, dry up."[2]

India's past is not uniform. Had Nehru meant by the past that period of Indian history when reason, thirst for knowledge and yearning for social justice were in ascendancy, his plea would have been sound and justified. But his praise in the paper of Gandhi and his conception of *Ram Rajya* show that it was the Brahmin past of which he was solicitous. Obviously he did not realise that scientific outlook was wholly incompatible with Brahmin ideals.

Nehru, if he was under any compulsion to derive inspiration from the past, had two models from Indian history, the Mauriyas and the Guptas, before him for guidance. Significantly, he chose the Gupta period which he called the "Golden Age of India" and to which he has paid glowing tributes in eloquent language in *The Discovery of India*. Samudra Gupta, the imperialist, and not Ashoka, the humanist, was Nehru's ideal. He said that the age of Guptas was "enlightened, vigorous, highly cultured, and full of vitality...one of its great rulers, Samudra Gupta, has been called the Indian Napoleon."[3]

It is hardly surprising that under the Congress Raj India is witnessing a second "golden age" of a similar variety as the one during the rule of the Guptas; the same affluence, limitless extravagance and vulgarity of the upper classes side by side with dire povery and utter wretchedness of the toiling masses.

In lamenting Nehru's muddle-headedness, it would, however, be unfair to ignore or underrate the good work that he did under inspiration of the Western culture which had left deep impressions on Indian mind during the days of the British rule. But for his indecisiveness Nehru would have risen to the occasion. "Nehru never wished to be a tyrant, but he became one—not a great one but a petty one, and not through will but through vacillation."[4]

Nehru's biggest achievement was that he was able despite widespread political and communal disturbances, to hold India together, restore law and order and stabilise administration in a few months after the withdrawal of the British. A man of rare sensibility and compassion, he cared much for the victims of the partition. He felt pained by human suffering.

With surprising and commendable speed, the Constituent Assembly which consisted of those elected to the Central

Legislature in the general elections of 1946, drafted, under Nehru's leadership, a new comprehensive constitution for the country and in November 1949 adopted it almost unanimously. The glorious Preamble of the Constitution declared :

> We the people of India having solemnly resolved to constitute into a Sovereign Democratic Republic and to secure to all citizens, Justice, social, economic and political, Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, Equality of status and of opportunity, and to promote among them all Fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity of the nation, hereby adopt, enact and give ourselves this Constitution.

The human values evolved in the three great revolutions of world history—French, American and Russian—are there in a nutshell in this succinct and potential declaration.

Even to desire the grafting of secular democracy on the basically hierarchical Indian society was no easy achievement and the main credit for it should go to Jawaharlal Nehru. If today India is not a theocratic state, at least in theory, it is due to the endeavours of this dynamic personality who strove, along with a handful of progressives, against heavy odds to modernize India's mediaeval society.

Taking the 1935 Act as a working model, the new Constitution introduced a federal state with a parliamentary type of democratic government. The Central Legislature or parliament has two houses, the *Lok Sabha* (lower house) representing the people and the *Rajya Sabha* (upper house) representing the States (as the provinces were renamed). The States have their own legislatures with some having also a second chamber where special interests are represented. Whether in the Centre or in the States parliamentary responsibility prevails. Suffrage is universal and every adult person, man and women, is entitled to vote in both Central and State elections.

Some of the features of the new Constitution are notable. The judiciary under the direction of the Supreme Court is independent and free of any influence of the executive or legislature. The fundmental rights of a citizen have been clearly defined and declared inviolable; among others they include complete freedom of expression and right to form

association[5]; caste distinctions have been ignored throughout in the provisions of the Constitution and untouchability has been abolished and its practice in any form forbidden under article 15(2) and 16(2).

Part IV of the Constitution contains Directive Principles of State Policy (not enforceable by any court) but submitted for guidance of the Legislature, the Government and the Judiciary. Among the principles which deserve particular notice are : (a) that all citizens have the right to an adequate means of livelihood, (b) that operation of economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment, and (c) that equal pay should be given to both men and women for equal work. Article 45 in this part calls upon the State to provide within a period of ten years free compulsory education for all children upto the age of 14 years.

These provisions would show that, broadly, the Constitution was built on the political and ethical principles which, unknown to Brahmin civilisation, had been painstakingly fostered by the enlightened British rule. Generally the spirit that animates the Constitution breathes a Western flavour.

To be able to adopt a comprehensive Constitution dealing with every aspect of social life, within a short period of barely two years was a significant achievement. But more remarkable was the holding of first general elections at the end of 1952. For the first time in India's history, every man and women over twenty one years of age had a vote in determining the destiny of the nation. The electorate numbered about 176 million, the largest in any country in the world—the majority of them illiterate. There was 90,000 polling stations, 224,000 polling booths and 620 million ballot papers; by any measure stupendous indeed. One could legitimately feel proud of such an accomplishment.

Did Nehru and thinkers of his ilk in the Congress turn a new leaf and decide to banish Brahminism and lead the country on path of modernism ? One wishes to give the answer in the affirmative, but as subsequent developments have shown, the Constitution was meant to serve a facade; Nehru was following the tradition of the Gita as suited the contemporary age. To

undermine the Samkhya, Sri Krishna had at the outset extolled the sovereignty of Reason and Intelligence in his dialogue with Arjuna but ultimately established the superiority of blind faith in the Vedanta and Personal God. Nehru was maintaining the style of the Gita to preserve hoary institutions under the umbrella of Republican Constitution.

We need not go into all sections of the Constitution to examine it closely. It would be more fruitful to see how it has been made to operate during the past twenty-seven years. The framers of the Constitution let the cat of revivalism out of the bag when they designated the new States as "India that is Bharat", a nomenclature which carries a special meaning. India has no savour of religion but Bharat is an ancient legacy with deep roots in the Brahminical past. The conflict between India and Bharat may not be clear in theory, but it is so conspicuous in practice.

The Congress had in pre-Independence days repeatedly declared that Hindustani in both Devnagari and Persian scripts would be the lingua franca of free India because it was more or less understood in all parts of the country. In his weekly *Harijan* Gandhi wrote on August 10, 1947 :

> "The Congress must stand firm as rock. It dare not give way on the question of lingua franca of India. It cannot be Persianised Urdu or Sanskritised Hindi. It must be a beautiful blend of the two simple forms written in either script. Let us not turn away from the Urdu script."

The Constitution despite strong opposition from various sections of delegates in the Constituent Assembly, made Hindi in Devnagari Script as the national language of India which is Greek to all the non-Hindu minorities as also to the Hindus living in South India. It is well to remember that even after partition approximately 60 million Muslims continue to live in India, who either speak Urdu or have sentimental ties with the language. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, veteran leader and a former Congress President, felt upset at the intolerance exhibited in adopting the Hindi Resolution.

Incredible as it may seem, some attempts were made to have Sanskrit as the national language. Dr. K. N. Katju,

an eminent nationalist leader who became, by turns, Governor, a State chief minister and member of Central Cabinet under Congress Raj, seriously suggested on November 2, 1949 : "Though I do not know Sanskrit I strongly hold the view that it should be made the national language of the country." Chief Justice Patanjali Shastri declared on January 4, 1953 : "If only we realise the importance of Sanskrit for maintenance and propagation of our culture both in this country and abroad it would be a great unifying force. I am one of those who look forward to Sanskrit being made the national language at no distant future."

For many years prior to Independence the Congress had used two songs—*Bande Matram* of Bankimchandra Chatterji and *Sare Jahan se Achha* of Mohammad Iqbal—as national songs which were sung in public meetings and at national festivals. Unexpectedly, the Constituent Assembly was persuaded to adopt Rabindranath Tagore's *Jana Gana Mana* (little known outside Bengal before 1949) as the national anthem perhaps because, apart from having been composed by the great poet, it abounds in Sanskrit phraseology and Hindu religious concepts. 'Bande Matram' and 'Sare Jahan se Achha' failed to pass the test. Bande Matram, it will be recalled, had been culled from the anti-Muslim novel *Anand Math*; it deifies India as mother goddess and is full of idolatrous imageries repugnant to Muslim religious sentiment. Sare Jahan Se Achha is in simple Urdu, sweet, passionately nationalistic, secular and deeply stirring. Yet while Bande Matram was to enjoy an honour second to Jana Gana Mana of being a national song, Sare Jahan Se Achha fell from grace. The anti-Muslim outlook of Chatterji was condoned but not Iqbal's disqualification of being a Pakistani, though there are millions in India who admire and love his poetry. Even Niharranjan Ray who has taken sufficient pains to justify the anti-Muslim attitude of Bankim Chatterji said :

> "Who would doubt that the conception and concretization of the image of the Mother in the Vandematram song, howsoever precise and aesthetically effective, is essentially a Brahminical one and cannot by any stretch of imagin-

> ation have any appeal for a Muslim or a Christian, and that it would indeed be distasteful to them."[6]

The Vedic mantram *satyameva jayate* (truth alone triumphs) was made the national motto and it was inscribed on all State emblems, important official publications and even on letter heads used by State dignitaries. One is left to wonder why a suitable saying of a venerable thinker could not be culled from modern secular literature for the purpose.

Among the Directive Principles of State policy is one purporting to ban the slaughter of cow, the animal sacred in the eyes of most Hindus. When the clause was moved in the Constituent Assembly, a non-Muslim Congress Minister of Assam protested on November 19, 1949 :

> "It will not be economic at all to prevent the slaughter of cows under all circumstances. If it means total prohibition, that will be a blot (on the Constitution) and an oppression to some people, especially to the hill people, who eat beef and raise cattle for the purpose. It will also be an oppression to people who slaughter cows in sacrifice. Even the Hindu Gurkhas in Assam sacrifice buffaloes at the time of Durga Puja."

Of course, the 60 million Muslims whom the minister did not mention, are beef-eaters. But in disregard of the rights and habits of the millions of non-Hindus the directive principle was adopted because cow become an object of veneration in the eyes of orthodox Hindus in Gupta age after the downfall of Buddhism. Consequently, one after another State governments and municipal corporations in different parts of India have banned cow-slaughter. Such arbitrary action could not bring Hindus closer to non-Hindus; the Muslims only chafed at the denial to them of a basic human right.

The cleavage between the Hindus and Muslims widened for other reasons too. The nationalist Hindus cannot reconcile themselves to the partition and continue to believe that the entire subcontinent belongs to them and non-Hindus can live in it only if they accept Brahmin culture, which of course is the best human culture in their eyes.

In a conversation with Leonard Mosley in 1960, Nehru blurted out :

> "The truth is that we are tired men, and we are getting on in years too. Few of us could stand the prospects of going to prison again and if we had stood out for a united India as we wished it, prison obviously awaited us...The plan for partition offered a way out and took it...We expected that partition would be temporary, *that Pakistan was bound to come back to us.*" (italics mine).[7]

Nehru was not alone to entertain such a hope. It was a common belief among the Hindu nationalists that with the disappearance of "satanic" British rule, as Gandhi called it, Muslims would realize the folly of getting the subcontinent partitioned, have a favourable opinion of the Hindu character and desire Pakistan to be reunited with Bharat. But the desire could materialise only if the Muslims were enabled to have happier experiences of Hindus in power. No such change for the better was discernible after Independence. On the contrary, apart from the accession of Kashmir to India by a fraudulent method, the Congress leaders, puffed up with awareness of India's superior might, behaved in a supercilious manner as to make reconciliation an unreal dream.

In the *Hind Swaraj* Mahatma Gandhi had said : "If they wish to remain in India along with their civilisation there is no room for them. It lies with us to bring about such a state of things...If we keep our own house in order only those who are fit to live in it will remain. Others will leave of their own accord." Though the warning was meant only for the British it could be, and was, extended and applied to all non-Hindus.

Were the framers of the Constitution executing the intentions of the Mahatma by inserting discriminatory clauses in the Vital Document ?

Expressing the common feeling of nationalist India, Purshottam Das Tandon, who was elected later as President of the Congress, said on August 15, 1948, at Jabbalpur :

> "There should not be any more talk of separate culture and language in the Indian Union. There should be no room for such persons in the Indian Union who advocate separate culture and separate language for a particular community; (if) such people cannot change their outlook and pledge their unstinted loyalty to the Indian Union,

they should quit India and sooner they do so the better for them and India."

Refusal of non-Hindus, particularly the Muslims, to assimilate with the majority of the people has hampered the growth of national consciousness in India and caused perplexity to patriots. But had the distinguished Congress leader cared to dispassionately study the reasons for it he would have found the main one in the caste-ridden outlook of the Hindus. Assimilation is the process of interpenetration and fusion of the customs, traditions and historical backgrounds of different ethnic and religious groups in a manner that their major cultural distinctions become synthesised into one culture and the groups become one people sharing privileges and responsibilities of a common society. Such a process of assimilation was not allowed to develop in India. Hence the keen desire of the Muslims to preserve their culture and language which unjustifiably makes the Hindu nationalist indignant.

Dislike it as much as we may, the Hindus and the Muslims have been for centuries, and remain to this day, mentally far removed from each other. Even the growth of political consciousness in the current century did not foster national sentiments but only aggravated the communal outlook of the people. They cherish different traditions, observe different customs, admire different heroes and even interpret historical events differently. As has been pointed out by R. C. Majumdar "the historic consciousness operated upon the two major elements of the population, the Hindus and the Muslims, in diametrically opposite ways. Every historical incident in the past which reflected glory upon the one was a humiliating memory to the other. The triumphs of Muhammad Qasim, Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni and Muhammad Ghuri which swelled the pride of the Muslims as a great conquering nation of the world only evoked painful memories of the national degradation and humiliation in the minds of the Hindus."[8] The historian could well have added that Shivaji and Rana Pratap whom Muslims do not admire for having been rebels against Mughal rule and indeed consider them as anti-Muslim brigands are glorified by the Hindus and raised on the pedestal

of great national heroes. If the Hindus cannot give up their narrow approach to history how may we expect the Muslims to do so?

Fed during long decades of freedom struggle on the slogan that mutual distrust of Hindus and Muslims is a creation of British imperialists to perpetuate their own rule, a simple-minded and peace loving Indian is baffled by the fact that the communal situation has worsened after Independence. The oversimplified manner in which the problem was presented by the leaders before attaining sovereign power raised the hope that clashes between followers of the two faiths would cease with the exit of the evil-intentioned foreign rule. That has not come to pass. On the contrary, to our shame, nasty communal riots have become nastier and numerous, and according to one estimate the number of victims of religious frenzy after Independence has been larger than the number of those who suffered in such clashes during the entire period of British rule.

According to the Indian Home Ministry's reports the number of communal riots in the country during 1966, 1967, 1968, and 1969, was 132, 220, 342 and 521 respectively. In 1970 the figure went up to 521 of which 25 were of serious nature; then in 1971 and 1972 it came down to 321 and 240 respectively. During 1973 there were 173 incidents till August out of which seven were serious. Justice Basheer Ahmed Sayeed who presided over the All-India Aligarh Muslim University Convention in March 1973, has stated that there have been about 8000 communal riots, big and small, since Independence. This may be an exaggeration but there is no gainsaying the fact that hardly a month passes by when a few communal clashes do not take place in different parts of the country and at least some of them assume big proportions.

It may be added in fairness that in the past some of these riots got started by provocations of foolish antics of Muslim mountebanks; also that many innocent Hindus too suffered in the disturbances at the hands of the miscreants. It must at the same time be recognised that the Muslims not infrequently find themselves in a desperate position and decide to take the

initiative to kill because they feel convinced that they are going to be killed.

There is a common feeling among the Muslims that during the days of communal disturbances they do not get from the police and local administration the protection to which a citizen is entitled. In many cases when massacres were taking place local authorities at best looked the other way, if they did not actually help and support the Hindu culprits.

In September 1969, a dreadful communal clash occurred in Gujarat when over a thousand innocent men, women and children were killed and property worth millions of rupees looted or destroyed by fire. It was a ghastly affair and every decent Indian hung his head in shame at the atrocities and butchery that took place during the three days of rioting. The shaken Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, assured the nation that never will her Government tolerate preaching of communal hatred or incitement to violence by any individual or group.

Barely four months after the gruesome happenings, a special function was held in Ahmedabad in which Brajnarain Brajesh President All-India Hindu Mahasabha, described the massacre as *dharma-yudha* (righteous war). The Hindu murderers were publicly praised and rewarded for their nefarious deeds during the bloody days. With fiendish pride Brajesh said that "Ahmedabad has set an example before the country of how to save religion."[9] Five men charged with murder, arson and rioting were adorned with the title of *dharma virs* (heores of Hindu culture) Among the recipients of the honour, reported the *Times of India* correspondent, was one who had been charged with commiting no fewer than ninety-five murders. The local authorities took no notice of the blatant incitement to violence and let the organisers of the special function go scot free.

It may be added that the obnoxious celebrations were in keeping with the spirit of Hindu nationalism fostered and maintained by Congressmen and the national government as evidenced by a typical example. V. D. Savarkar was a militant Hindu leader who had during his lifetime earned notoriety for his irrepressible fulminations and dark designs against secular politics. He was a rabid communalist and spent many years

of his life in making venomous speeches against the Muslims. He was involved in the Gandhi murder conspiracy, arrested, tried though finally acquitted of the charge. Yet the Congress Government considered him entitled to a national honour. A postage stamp bearing his portrait was issued to commemorate Savarkar's "inestimable services" to the country.

At the time of this writing (May 5, 19 74) a communal riot took place in Sadar Bazar, the heart of Delhi, which the *Times of India* called "the worst communal flare-up in the capital." Ten people were killed and sixty injured, shops were looted, a part of the prosperous market gutted and houses razed. "Sadar Bazar rioting was a classical example", wrote the *Hindustan Times* correspondent, "of what has been happening in recent years in Delhi itself, in towns far and near, whether neighbouring Meerut or Gujarat and Maharashtra." It was astounding to hear Union Home Minister Dikshit unabashedly confessing before the Lok Sabha that "Government intelligence apparatus had failed to alert the administration about the Delhi riots in time." What a staggering admission of inefficiency after 27 years of Congress Raj!

Having whole-heartedly supported the pernicious two nation theory during the last phase of the Freedom Struggle the Muslims found themselves in a most unenviable position after Independence. Those living in the Hindu majority areas of the subcontinent had incredibly forgotten that even after the creation of Pakistan most of them would continue to live where they were born and the intensification of communal mentality would be hurtful to themselves. Had the total exchange of population taken place, as had been suggested by some politicians, it would perhaps have been different, but it was understood on all hands that the wholesale exchange was an immoral, impracticable, indeed an impossible task which no responsible agency was prepared to undertake or even to envisage. Therefore, the minorities in both India and Pakistan were reduced to a pathetic plight. They were reckoned as an anti-national element by the majority community in both the sovereign States.

For every misbehaviour on the part of Pakistan, the Muslims in India had to share the blame; the Hindus in

Pakistan were suspected of being agents of the Indian Government. That was so because after partition sympathy of Indian Muslims was more with Pakistan than with India as it should have been. Similarly Pakistani Hindu instead of cherishing loyalty to Pakistan as their motherland looked more towards India as a friend in time of distress.

The Hindu-Muslim problem has thus got inextricably intermixed with Indo-Pakistan relations. A clash between the two countries is only a new and additional form of Hindu-Muslim antagonism. The communal quarrel after partition has risen to the plane of an international dispute.

In the climate of fear, distrust and antagonism Muslims have been unable to get assimilated in the Indian Nation. They feel that though they live in India they are not part of the Indian society; they feel they are deprived of the rights guaranteed in the Constitution to all people and discriminated against. "In the rapidly deteriorating economic conditions in the country", lamented Inder Malhotra, a knowledgeable analyst of Indian affairs, "Muslims are hit the hardest. There are not even clerical posts or chaprasis jobs available to them. Most commercial concerns are Hindu and controlled by members of one family who prefer to employ their own relations. Anti-Muslim prejudice is equally manifest in large industrial enterprises including those in the public sector. The situation in Government services is no better. Figures of 1965 in the three all-India services are revealing. Of the 2100 IAS officers, only 111 were Muslims; of the 270 members in the Indian Foreign Service, only 12 were Muslims, of the 1200 in police service only 43 were Muslims. In the Central Secretariat Sevices there were six Muslim officers out of 681 in the two grades; in the lower grade four Muslims among 2000 and 21 Muslims among 9900 clerks."[10]

Emulating the Gupta emperors and accepting their political philosophy as the very best, Nehru could not resist the urge of expanding Indian territories by occupying Kashmir (Majority Muslim), Nagaland (majority Christian), Hyderabad, Junagadh and Goa with the force of arms.

The most unfortunate step taken by Nehru at the very advent of Independence which opened the chasm between

India and Pakistan was the acceptance of the accession offer made by Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir in October 1947 without securing the free consent of the people. of the State Being a princely state with predominently Muslim population, Kashmir, in accordance with the principles governing the partition of the subcontinent, should have formed, if the Kashmiris did not oppose it, a part of the newly-created Islamic State of Pakistan. Logically, it is true, the multi-cultural state should have been divided and the Hindu majority region of Jammu and Buddhist majority area of Ladakh allowed to accede to India if the local population so desired. The justification offered by Nehru for accession of the entire State to India was that the Kashmir Muslims, as represented by the National Conference under Sheikh Abdullah's leadership, had rejected the two-nation theory of Jinnah and adopted secular democracy as their ideal. But there was no reliable evidence that the State people backed the claims of the National Conference except that Nehru said it was so. To maintain a democratic facade of the ill-conceived accession the Indian Government gave frequent assurances to the world and the State people that a referendum would be held on the issue and India would abide by the verdict of the State people's free vote.

Accepting the accession offer of the Maharaja, Lord Mountbatten, first Governor General of Free India, solemnly declared in his letter dated October 27, 1947 :

> "In consistence with their policy that in the case of any (native) State where the issue of accession has been the subject of dispute, the question of accession should be decided in accordance with the wishes of the people of the State, it is my Government's wish that as soon as law and order have been restored in Kashmir and her soil cleared of the invader the question of State's accession should be settled by a reference to the people."

On November 2, 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru in a broadcast from All-India Radio, confirmed the assurance given by the Governor-General :

> "We have declared that the fate of Kashmir is ultimately to be decided by the people. That pledge we have given

> and the Maharaja has supported it, not only to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, but also to the world. We will not and cannot back out of it. We are prepared when peace and law have been established to have a referendum held under international auspices like the United Nations. We want it to be fair and just reference to the people and we shall accept their verdict. *I can imagine no fair and juster offer.*" (emphasis mine)

Pakistan was not opposed to the referendum proposal but insisted on getting it implemented immediately under joint supervision of the two governments. Unfortunately no agreement about the ways and means of holding the referendum was reached in the negotiations held in November 1947 for many days at the highest level. Pakistan considered Kashmir vital to her existence and was therefore extremely impatient to have it even without ascertaining the desire of the Kashmiris. Already in her desperation she had committed a breach of International law by despatching batches of armed tribesmen from North Western Frontier Province (NWFP) to the State who carried death and destruction, rape and arson in the valley. It led in the closing days of 1947 to the first Indo-Pak war over the possession of Jammu and Kashmir which lasted till the end of 1949 when a cease-fire was effected under the auspices of the UN.

India presented Kashmir case to the Security Council of the United Nations in January 1948, requesting the world body to forbid Pakistan from interfering in the State affairs and to withdraw armed tribesmen. The verdict of the Security Council, after a sifting enquiry, was that the accession issue, which was the real cause of the Indo-Pak war, should be settled by the will of the people of the State through an impartial and fair plebiscite held under the neutral auspices of the UN. Conscious of the outcome of the plebiscite which was expected to go against India, the Nehru Government accepted the U.N. Resolution with reservations and evaded its implementation under one pretext or another thus continuing to keep the major part of the State which had been cleared of the tribesmen by Indian army with India as one of its constituent

units. The smaller part which came to be known as "Azad Kashmir" was taken over by Pakistan.

The original Indian case as submitted to the Security Council was that the Maharaja had acceded to the Indian Dominion as he was entitled to do under provisions of the Independence Act passed by the British Parliament. But India's weakness was that she had rejected this ground in the case of Junagadh and Hyderabad, the ruler of the former actually acceded to Pakistan and the Nizam of the latter expressed his desire to remain independent. In both cases India insisted that the will of the people (majority Hindu) should prevail. This aim was achieved though not without armed intervention in both the States. To appear consistent, India offered holding impartial plebiscite in Kashmir to settle its future democratically. But actually the plebiscite became a remote possibility as India's attitude became stiffer against it with the passage of time.

The arguments thought out later in justification of India's arbitrary stand are : Kashmir has a strategic position in the subcontinent; its secession will endanger the security of the country; extremist sections will be strengthened and grow out of control; communalism will become rampant and impair the spirit of secularism and democracy; Indian politics will suffer from instability and, above all, the life and property of the Indian Muslims none-too-secure at present will be much more in jeopardy. Therefore, knowing that the result of a plebiscite is going to be adverse to her, India has stubbornly set her face against holding it under any circumstance. It is conveniently forgotten that none of these pleas or all of them put together, can outweigh the consideration that the human right of the Kashmiris to decide their own future is paramount and they cannot be had for ever as hostages on the basis of certain hypothetical issues. Besides, statesmanship would suggest that it is ruinous to India herself to hold resentful and disaffected State Muslims under the pretence that they are willing to be a part of Hindu society.

The holding of the promised referendum has been evaded for 27 years because the Kashmir Muslims have consistently

refused to accept the hegemony of Hindu nationalism. They have therefore been deprived not only of taking a free decision about their future relationship with the outside world but also of the fundamental rights guaranteed to all Indians by the Constitution. Nehru's "fair and juster offer" was thrown into the dustbin of history. Thousands of Kashmiri patriots have been imprisoned and hundreds killed by firings for demanding their human and democratic liberties.[11] The general elections to the State legislature as well as the election of members to Indian Parliament from Jammu and Kashmir have been farcical ever since Independence. For there can be, under the present circumstances, neither free association of independent-minded persons nor free expression of opinion in the State.

There is a bunch of Kashmir State regulations such as Egress and Internal Movement Control Order, Preventive Detention Act, Enemy Agents Ordinance, Security Act, Suppression of Sabotage Act. etc., to curtail liberty of the citizen and arbitrarily deal with a political worker who refuses to toe the line of the ruling clique.

In Kashmir as nowhere in India, any person can be arrested and held in detention for a period of five years without being apprised of the nature of his crime or the grounds for his detention. After release he can be rearrested and kept in imprisonment for another term of five years.

Ironically, in August 1953, Sheikh Abdullah and his followers, for reasons variously stated, turned a political somersault by declaring that the State's accession to India was temporary and the people should be provided the opportunity to freely vote as to where they desire to be. Confronted with an embarrassing situation thus created, India promptly deposed the slippery Sheikh from premiership and imprisoned him along with hundreds of his followers. There was a commotion in the Valley when 46 people (official figure) were killed by police firing and many more injured; non-official estimates of the casualties give higher figures; one report putting the deaths at 200.

India had to go thrice to war—in 1947, 1965 and 1971—with Pakistan primarily because of the Kashmir dispute. The

first of these clashes occurred in the lifetime of Nehru. He has said that even Mahatma Gandhi who opposed violence as a matter of principal, had given his blessings for success of Indian troops who were despatched to the turbulent valley and had to suppress local patriots and freedom fighters beside liquidating intruding armed tribesmen from Pakistan. It is a sad commentry on Gandhi's integrity for, in reply to a report on the first political and communal disturbances in the Kashmir State which I submitted to the Mahatma in early thirties, he categorically stated on May 15, 1934.

> "Seeing that Kashmir is predominantly Mussalman it is bound one day to become a Mussalman State. A Hindu prince can therefore only rule by not ruling, i.e. by allowing the Mussalmans to do as they like or by abdicating when they are manifestly going wrong."

When the opportunity arrived for Mussalmans "to do as they liked" the Mahatma blessed the Indian army which had been despatched to protect Maharaja's rule by suppressing the freedom-loving Muslims and preventing them from fulfilling their legitimate desire. What an example of devotion to truth and non-violence.

Speaking for myself, the political, constitutional and legal aspects of the Kashmir problem are of lesser significance, though not unimportant in themselves; it is the moral issue that heavily weighs on me. Should the Kashmiris live perpetually under fear and never experience the ecstasy of freedom for which they have struggled since 1931 ? The frustration born of their present state of helplessness has already made them cringing cowards, unreliable opportunists and unlovable dissimulators as they had never been even in their long history of abject servitude under the cruel rule of native or foreign despots.[12]

It is astonishing that Nehru should have resorted to war within three months of taking over as Prime Minister for in *The Discovery of India* written only four years earlier, he had affirmed :

> "War, which is an extreme example of this conflict results in a deliberate throwing overboard of all fairness and impartiality so far as the enemy nation is concerned;

> the mind coarsens and becomes closed to almost all avenues of approach except one. The overpowering need of the moment is to justify one's own actions and condemn and blacken those of the enemy. Truth hides somewhere at the bottom of the deepest well and falsehood, naked and unashamed, reigns almost supreme."[13]

Nehru did nothing in 1947-48 to falsify his description of war morality, nor did his successors when two more clashes occurred in 1965 and 1971.

Interestingly, India has not discarded the principle of right of self-determination but continues to lay stress on it while supporting the cause of other people struggling for liberation from an unwanted rule in any part of the world. But she maintains a separate standard of justice for the Kashmiri. Any mention of the self-determination right in reference to Kashmir sends a nationalist politician into tantrums. Even raising of the slogan in the State is taboo. And yet the Congress leaders would like the world to believe that Kashmir is a part of India with the fullest approval and support of the Kashmiris.

Kashmir is maintained as part of the Indian Republic at an enormous cost in terms of national interests. Not only has the dispute bedevilled relations between India and Pakistan, it has disallowed the growth of a balanced and sane foreign policy because friendliness of a country is tested by us mostly by its attitude towards our doings in Kashmir; it has dwarfed the growth of our stature in the comity of nation; it has compelled raising our defence budget to gigantic proportion; it has irreparably damaged our economy and, above all, it has accentuated the pernicious communal problem and prevented the Muslim minority from settling down as loyal citizens of the State after partition as we had expected them to do.

Despite Sheikh Abdullah's tergiversations[14] no indication were ever discernible that the Kashmiri is happy or contented by being with India; all noble intentions and nobler measures of the Indian Government have failed to persuade them to shed Pro-pak proclivities. It is debatable whether the State could have been able to make the economic and educational progress under Pakistan as it has registered

during the post-Independence period. Some people believe—and I am one of them—that in many respects the Muslims would be losers if and when they become a part of Pakistan; subsequently they might repent for their unwise decision, the emotional gain would not compensate for the physical losses. Yet it is difficult to deny that the Kashmiris are with India under coercion; they feel spiritually and culturally enslaved and frequently look towards Pakistan for getting themselves emancipated.

The more emphatically India refuses the Kashmiris their right of self-determination the intenser grows their desire to run away from India and be attracted by Pakistan even though they see least chance of fulfilment of their long-cherished democratic aspiration by becoming a part of that country. It is a psychosis from which the Kashmiris suffer. Little wonder that the number of such people grew in India who believed that as long as Pakistan is militarily strong and politically unified Kashmir cannot be retained by India. The belief partly contributed to the 1971 Indo-Pak war and the separation of East Bengal from West Pakistan.

The Islamic State of Pakistan had two wings, Western consisting of West Punjab, NWFP, Sindh and Baluchistan (population 57 m) and Eastern comprising East Bengal (population 64 m). The two wings had nothing in common but the religion of the people. After Independence Pakistan had a chequered history—civilian government alternating with military rule. When Marshall Ayub Khan put down the reins of office in 1969 the Government was captured by a junta of militarymen headed by General Yahya Khan.

For twenty-three years (1947-70) when West Pakistan progressed East Pakistan grew poorer year after year. The bulk of expenditure on defence and civil administration—70 p.c. of the Central budget—was mostly spent in West Pakistan. Side by side with economic subjugation of East Bengal plans were drawn up by West Pakistan leaders to undermine Bengali culture which was considered to contain remnants of its Hindu past; even attempts, though unsuccessful, were made to replace Bengali language by Urdu. Such designs made the Bengalis furious and provoked them to revolt; they aspired to

acquire an autonomous status, if not to live separately from west Pakistan.

In the general elections held in December 1970 by the Yahya Khan Government, Awami League party under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, championing this viewpoint swept the polls, capturing 167 seats out of 313 in the Pakistan National Assembly and 288 out of 310 seats in the provincial legislature. The election results came as a shock to the ruling military junta at the Centre; and acute differences arose when the popular party of Bengali politicians demanded their due share in the Government.

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement launched to press his demands while he was having talks with President Yahya Khan, did not help matters. What, however, exhausted the patience of army men was the programme of the Awami League volunteers to liquidate non-Bengali Muslims in the province who, exercising their democratic right, generally voted against the Awami League and for rival candidates in the election.

An eye-witness of East Bengal tragedy, Anthony Mascarenhas, whose reports were highlighted in India as being impartial, in an article in London *Sunday Times* said :

> "Thousands of families of unfortunate Muslims, many of them refugees from Bihar who chose Pakistan at the time of Partition riots in 1947, were mercilessly wiped out. Women were raped, or had their breasts torn out with specially-fashioned knives. Children did not escape the horror; the lucky ones were killed with their parents; but many thousands of others must go through what life remains for them with eyes gouged out and limbs roughly amputated. More than 20,000 bodies of non-Bengalis have been found in the main towns such as Chittagong, Khulna and Jessore. The real toll, I was told everywhere in East Bengal, may have been as high as 100,000 for thousands of non-Bengali's have vanished without a trace."[15]

The responsibility of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and his close associates for the slaughter is difficult to ascertain. But there is nothing on record to show that he or the other Awami League leaders did anything to stop the carnage which

was a direct result of their inflammatory speeches against the non-Bengalis.

Failing to face the situation realistically and in a statesmanlike manner, General Yahya Khan imposed martial law on the East Wing. To suppress the uprising a reign of terror was unleashed by the Pakistan military authorities posted at Dacca. The army went berserk. With guns and bayonets, tanks and mortars, force and brutality the soldiers tried to control the situation killing thousands and uprooting millions from their ancestral homes. The terror-stricken Hindu Bengalis ran to take shelter in India; a handful of harassed Muslims also joined them. The onrush could have been stemmed by the Indian authorities. But partly on humanitarian grounds but mostly to descredit Pakistan in the eyes of the world, incoming refugees were directly or indirectly welcomed by the Indian leaders. Here they were sheltered and looked after. But when the small trickle assumed the form of a gigantic river of men, women and children—many of them old and invalid—unceasingly flowing into India, the Indian Government groaned under the unbearable burden. Within a few weeks the number of refugees reached the staggering figure of ten million according to Indian estimates; even Pakistan admitted the number to be between three and four million. To shelter, feed and clothe the helpless multitudes became an intolerable financial load. New imposts had to be levied on the Indian tax payer to meet the expenditure. A strong wave of indignation spread in India against Pakistan as the penniless, bedraggled and famished refugees spread far and wide in the country.

The ensuing chaos in East Pakistan and the influx of destitute refugees provided an opportunity to India to fish in troubled waters. Voicing the common feeling of the Hindu chauvinists A.B. Vajpayee, President Jan Singh, told the general council of his party at Udaipur on July 4, 1971 :

> "It is true that Mujibur Rehman was once a member of the Muslim League and had a hand in creation of Pakistan. But if today he has realized that partition was a mistake and two-nation theory is a myth and wants to bring about disintegration of Pakistan we should

> welcome this developments and extend him all help to achieve his objective."

Jayaprakash Narayan accepted as the best living interpreter of Gandhian non-violence, was completely swept off his feet. He stole a march over the Jan Sangh leadership by insisting on despatch of Indian armies into East Pakistan which he knew would lead to war. Inaugurating a conference in Patna on July 6 he unblushingly thundered : "The country, the Government and the people are unworthy if they are not prepared for a war." Ironically Narayan was chairman of the Indo-Pakistan Reconciliation Board which claimed to strive for bringing the two countries closer in friendship.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi dimly foresaw the risks involved in getting India embroiled in Pakistan's domestic affairs. She refused, at least in the early stages, to be swayed by the emotional outbursts of popularity-seeking politicians. But unfortunately she could not stand the terrific pressure for long. A resolution was passed, under her guidance, by the Indian Parliament supporting the uprising in Pakistan which clearly indicated the direction in which the country was moving."[16]

The Western Democracies, China and most of the Afro-Asian countries disapproved of the steps that the Indian Government took to weaken Pakistan and to interfere in her internal administration by demanding transfer of the administration of the disturbed wing into the hands of Awami League leaders who began to be openly patronized for their anti-Pakistan insurrection. For her own reasons the opportunist Soviet Russia sat on the fence in the beginning but later on supported the Indian demand. Early in August 1971 a 12-article treaty was signed between the two countries of which Article 9 declared :

> "In the event of an attack or a threat thereof, the two will immediately enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and the security of their countries."

India was preparing and equipping herself for the impending clash.

To enlist the sympathy of the Hindu public the Awami League leaders accepted the ideology more or less akin to that of Indian Nationalism though it was well-known that the Bengali Muslims are no less attached to Islamic political theories than any other section of Muslims in the subcontinent. In response, India, defying world opinion and international law and morality, despatched troops without any declaration of war, to assist the puny (some said non-existent) Awami League volunteer corps called *Mukti Bahini* to destroy the Punjabi army and overthrow the Pakistani regime in East Bengal. It resulted in the Indo-Pak war of December 1971 on both the Eastern and the Western fronts.

On 5th December a resolution was introduced in the Security Council calling upon India and Pakistan to stop fighting and withdraw their forces to their respective borders. The resolution was vetoed, under Indian pressure, by USSR. The issue was then taken to the General Assembly which adopted the resolution by 104 to 11 votes with 10 abstentions. Even all the Arab countries professedly friendly towards India stood by Pakistan. The UN members believed that the turmoil in East Bengal was an internal problem of Pakistan and India had no business to interfere in it. Never before had the world opinion been expressed so clearly on a dispute between two countries. Yet India rejected the UN decision and continued to wage the war.

The Pakistani army could not stand the gigantic war machine of India. The local population was also hostile to them. Therefore the Punjabi forces in East Bengal realizing their hopeless position meekly surrendered on 16th December 1971. It was a grand victory for India.

A new independent state of Bangladesh was born comprising the territory of erstwhile East Pakistan in which pro-India Awami League came to power. In her glorious hour Prime Minister Indira Gandhi wisely ordered a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities on the Western front. Pakistan, defeated and in utter confusion, saw wisdom in accepting the offer and, extremely humiliated, laid down arms; ninety thousand of her soldiers had been taken prisoner. Disgraced General Yahya Khan had to step down and the administration

of West Pakistan was taken over by Zulfiqar Ali Khan Bhutto, a former Foreign Minister.

In a study on the events in East Bengal in December 1971, the International Commission of Jurists, a body known for its objective assessment of world happenings, came to the conclusion that "India's claim that her invasion of Pakistan was justified under the doctrine of self-defence could not be accepted,, and that "Indian supply of arms and training to freedom fighters was a breach cf her neutrality."

The utter rout and humiliation of Pakistan in East Bengal and the emergence of Bangladesh enveloped Hindu India in euphoria. There was unprecedented jubilation not because democracy had triumphed over brute force in a neighbouring land, because the Islamic state carved out of the subcontinent had been disintegrated by the might of Indian armies. Ever since Independence dismemberment of Pakisian had never been abandoned as one of the aims of Hindu Nationalism. Very few in this country cared or had the least inclination to foresee at the time that what had happened would in the long run also damage our own vital national interests.

On March 19, 1972, India and Bangladesh signed a Friendship Treaty for 25 years in which it was stipulated, among other things, that both Dacca and New Delhi would consult each other "to eliminate any threat", if and when "either party is attacked or threatened by attack." A trade pact also was concluded bringing the two countries closer in the sphere of business and commerce. In reality, howe\er, Bangladesh by the very nature of the struggle which brought her liberation became obliged to India and this caused irritation to many in the newly-born sovereign state.

Things did not therefore proceed on as smoothly and happily as Hindu nationalists had desired. Despite their well-known ability to present Brahmin philosophy as based on the principles of humanism, cosmopolitanism and for the welfare of all (*Sarvodaya*) the game was soon seen through.

Two majority Muslim areas of the subcontinent are now with Bharat : Kashmir by being constitutionally an integral part of it and Bangladesh as a friendly and loyal neighbour. But neither in the one nor in the other are India and her

real politics much popular. Even after 25 years of uninterrupted Congress rule in Kashmir, it has not become possible to have free elections to the State legislature or to Indian Parliament. Having played a humble part in moulding Kashmir affairs for over four decades, I venture to say that if asked to freely decide whether they are for or against India a preponderant majority of the Muslims will opt for opposition. Not that the Kashmiris dislike Indian Constitution or have any love lost for Islamic State of Pakistan but undoubtedly they cherish no affection for Hindu Nationalism masqureading as secularism and fervently desire to get rid of it. It is not improbable that given a chance they will spurn accession to Pakistan and choose to establish an independent sovereign state of their own.

Parallel developments are taking place in Bangladesh. Grateful to India only two years ago for having helped them to secure liberation from Pakistan's military dictatorship, Bangladesh people are passing through none-too-happy experience at the hands of Indian votaries of democracy and seculaıism. "When our army and the *Mukti Bahini* liberated Dacca", wrote Khushwant Singh, "the skies of Bangladesh echoed to the cries of 'Joi Hind, Joi Bangla'. Today no one says Joi Bangla and the Bangladeshis are suspicious of everything Indian."[17] Like Sheikh Abdullah (from 1947-53) in Kashmir, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman in Bangladesh today is disconcerted by the mounting anti-Indian wave and is frequently compelled to warn the revilers of India of the punishment which their activities will bring about. "Sheikh Mujibur Rehman's comment the other day of Bangladesh politicians", observed a *Statesman* correspondent on August 25, 1973, "who indulge in communalism and anti-Indian propaganda was not the first time he spoke on this subject. Indeed the frequency with which Awami League spokesman have touched on this matter tends to support two conclusions : first that Dacca is deeply concerned about evidence of increasing hostility towards India, and, secondly, that it seems unsure of its capacity to resist it."

A feeling is growing in India that Bangladesh was not after all such a glorious achievement as it was hailed at the defeat of

Pakistan. To silence the rising and vehement protests against rapidly soaring prices of commodities, Mrs. Indira Gandhi confessed more than once that the deteriorating economy was partly a consequence of Bangladesh war. The *Statesman* correspondent above referred to, revealed : "There appears to be a myth that the cosy relations with Bangladesh built up during the war, will persist, that India can continue to draw indefinitely on the gratitude of the Bangladesh people, and that anything other than this is conceivable. New Delhi's foreign policy is liable to lapses of this kind." Cautioning the wishful thinkers in Indian administration the correspondent went on to say : "New Delhi has conducted its relations with Dacca with all tact it could muster. But the possibility that it will never be forgiven by Bangladesh for liberating it is an unpalatable truth which New Delhi's policy makers cannot now fail to take into account."

In view of these developments it would perhaps not be reckless to surmise that neither Kashmir will remain for ever with India nor will Bangladesh continue to be submissive for ever. To be sure, the latter will never again desire to be a part of Pakistan but it seems likely that in no distant future it will assume the shape of a Muslim State friendly with Pakistan and not so friendly with India.

When a summit conference of Muslim States was held at Lahore by the end of February 1974 to consider the Israel-Arab conflict, secularist Bangladesh yearned to participate in it and demonstrate its deep and sincere sympathy with Islamic solidarity. But her non-recognition by the host country stood in the way. Then Anwar Sadat of Egypt and some other Arab leaders intervened and successfully persuaded Prime Minister Bhutto to accord recognition to Bangladesh. Forthwith Sheikh Mujibur Rehman flew to Lahore and warmly embraced Pakistan leaders besides other Muslim dignitaries to show that he was one of them and stood within the pale of the faithful. A few days later at Dacca he told Kuldeep Nayar of the *Statesman* on February 27 :

> "I am impressed by Mr. Bhutto's sincerity. I am overwhelmed by love and affection shown by the people of Pakistan."

Nevertheless, tremendous efforts are being made by India to assist Bangladesh with money and technical know-how to build up her shattered economy. When Mrs. Gandhi and Sheikh Rehman met in Delhi for four days in mid-May, 1974, India agreed to give Bangladesh 69 crore rupees under credit arrangements. The intractable question of demarcation of Indo-Bangladesh border pending since 1947 was solved to mutual satisfaction and there were cordial talks on sharing of the waters of Ganga following the construction of Farakka Barrage. "The talks between Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Mujibur Rehman", commented the *Indian Express*, "have laid a firm foundation for friendship between India and Bangladesh."[13]

Neither stabilisation of Kashmir politics by suppression of free voice nor the traumatic creation of Bangaldesh has improved the Hindu-Muslim situation in India; as a matter of fact the two events have only aggravated it because, firstly, the Hindu leaders have failed to inspire confidence in their professions and, secondly, the Muslims remain unreconciled to the measures adopted by India in the two majority—Muslim regions of the subcontinent, to nullify the conception of Pakistan.

If Indian leaders believed that after her rout and loss of the East Wing in the December War, Pakistan would desist from making claims on Kashmir and, as Indira Gandhi asserted, "there was no Kashmir problem any more", subsequent developments have falsified that belief. Under the artful demagogue, Z.A. Bhutto, the Islamic State rose from the ashes and found its feet again within a short period of less than two years. With stabilisation of Pakistan politics and restoration of her shattered economy, Bhutto got a new constitution framed by the representative assembly elected on the eve of December War. He sent the military back to the barracks and reconstituted a civilian government.

Strongly backed by communist China which needs sovereign and sturdy Pakistan by her side to counterbalance the Russian influence in the region, Bhutto repaired one by one all the war damages influencing India to treat the vanquished neighbour on terms of equality at the Summit Conference in Simla held in July 1972.

China refused to recognise Bangladesh or withdraw her veto on the admission of the new-born State in the UN until UN Resolution on Indo-Pak was implemented and all war prisoners without exception set free and returned to their homes. A tripartite conference of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh cleared the way. Bangladesh which had insisted on trying at least 195 of the Pakistan soldiers among the prisoners for heinous crimes of rape and wanton killings, had to eat the humble pie.

Pakistan is earnestly rebuilding its war machine with the active assistance of USA, China and some Muslim countries; the latest reports indicate that her armed might has attained level of pre-War days. Loss of Bangladesh has not been after all an unmitigated tragedy to her. Freed from the liability of defending the vulnerable East Wing the West Pakistan may be better able to face India if it comes to yet another clash over Kashmir.

India may declare from housetops that she has no territorial claims on Pakistan but so long as the UN Resolution on Kashmir which are not an outcome of anti-India prejudice but are based on the principles underlying the Declaration of Human Rights, remain unimplemented it is unlikely that impartial observers can have faith in her declarations or everlasting peace can be established between the two countries. If today Pakistan's pronouncements are in a lower key and solicitous for peace and friendly relations with India it is because she does not yet feel strong enough to take up cudgels. Nevertheless, it continues to nurse bitter feelings on Kashmir which become acute with the awareness of the discontent and resentment against India among the State Muslims. But Pakistan can be no match against India if it comes to a showdown. There is no comparison between the resources—political, material, intellectual and physical—of the two. If unfortunately another war breaks out between them whoever may start it, there is the likelihood that if no Big Power is involved, the West Wing of Pakistan will go the same way as its East Wing has done. It may disintegrate; some of its parts may be annexed by neighbouring states and its core may emerge as an independent, sovereign, pro-India State ruled by a political

party akin to Awami League in Bangladesh. That would be the fulfilment of Nehru's dream of return of Pakistan to India. No doubt Hindu chauvinists will be over-joyed at the prospect devoutly wished for by them. But in this process Hindu Nationalism would also have become the grave-digger of Indian Democracy and sown the seeds of India's own destruction.

39

Under the Congress Raj (*ii*)

IF Jawaharlal Nehru, first Prime Minister, was a queer amalgam of Eastern and Western cultures, Babu Rajendra Prasad (1884-1963), first President of India, did not suffer from any mental confusion; he was a convinced believer, an embodiment of Hindu culture and Brahmin traditions.

Prasad was elected as titular head of Indian Republic in 1950 after the new Constitution had been adopted by the Constituent Assembly. A brilliant and reputed lawyer from Bihar, he had distinguished himself as an erudite scholar and a humble man committed to the ideal of simple living and spartan habits. He wrote a book on division of India and an autobiography. But of his writings more arresting is the collection of letters which he addressed his lady secretary, Mrs. Gyanwati Darbar, during the days he occupied the presidential palace known as Rashtrapati Bhavan. The collection entitled *Portrait of a President* gives a clear insight into the mind and character of Rajendra Prasad.

Extremely orthodox in his beliefs, Prasad had converted a part of the palace into a Hindu temple where he regularly offered puja (worship) to Brahmin idols and recited portions of the Gita early in the morning. He widely toured the country frequenting famous *tirthas* (religious places) like Hardwar, Kashi and Tirupati where the washed the feet of Brahmins in recognition of their superiority and his faith in varnashrama

dharma. Like the illustrious Vivekananda and Aurobindo Ghose, Prasad too attended seances where, according to Brahmin belief, a medium receives communications from the dead. At one of the seances the spirit of Gandhi appeared. Rajendra Prasad asked for a message in writing. On May 16, 1958, (ten years after Gandhi's assassination) the late President records : "I got a letter written in Bapu's (Gandhi's) own hand." No one has seen this incredible letter written by the dead Mahatma. Was the letter a reality or only a figment of Prasad's imagination ?

Rashtrapti Bhawan became a rendezvous of sadhus, astrologers and soothsayers while Prasad was the President. His faith in their powers and predictions was astounding. To cure his chronic asthma and headaches he secured *vibhutis* (sacred ashes) from yogis for application to the ailing limbs of his body. But, says Khushwant Singh, "neither the *kaya-kalpa* nor any of the charms he wore helped him to turn back the inexorable march of time to recapture his youth or save him from the compulsion of massive intake of aspirin."[1]

With his unshakable faith in astrology, Dr. Rajendra Prasad wanted no important State measure to be taken without the approval of Brahmin astrologers. He moaned that "many of our plans went awry because they were launched on inauspicious days." Nehru's accommodating spirit notwithstanding, Prasad held that the choice of the 15th of August being disfavoured by stars for the ceremonial transfer of power, was a mistake.

Congressmen—Gandhi's disciples in particular—have been assailed after Independence for their lust for power and scramble for office, vulgar display of affluence and lavish expenditure. While common people continue to suffer from want and squalor, Congressmen enjoy all amenities of office and roll in wealth. Installed comfortably in the presidential palace, Rajendra Prasad's defence was typical. "All that can be said about such criticism is that standards set during a time of struggle and accepted by the people cannot be expected to be equally acceptable when the struggle is over."[2] At the same time, however, Prasad rebuked Congressmen for hanging on to power. In his letter to Mrs. Darbar he frequently talks (as

did Nehru in his statements) of his desire to quit office and devote the rest of his life to the service of down-trodden rural folk. Yet he clung to office as long as he could. Exposing the hypocrisy, Khushwant Singh commented : "He (Prasad) knew he was in frail health and his poor eye-sight had become a real handicap in the discharge of his office. He was well aware that Pandit Nehru and many others wanted him to retire and elect Dr. Radhakrishnan to his place. Nevertheless he manoeuvred to have himself reelected for a second time without giving the impression that he was anxious for office."[3]

The next occupant of the Presidential gaddi, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, was no less a staunch believer in the Brahmin doctrines and dogmas. Having identified himself with the Hindu revivalism and provided its philosophical base, no persuasion was needed on behalf of Nehru to make the Professor accept, in 1949, the offer of a diplomatic assignment. He had already functioned as a member of the Constituent Assembly from 1947-49, when he was deputed as ambassador to Moscow. The relations between India and USSR at the time were none-too-happy. Russian leaders called Nehru the "running dog of British Imperialism." After cooling his heels at Moscow for many a month, Radhakrishnan was fortunate to have an interview with Joseph Stalin, the iron dictator of USSR. "It must be set down as one of the miracles in modern diplomacy", later wrote Radhakrishnan's biographer, K. Ishwara Dutt, "that one who never concealed his horror of a godless system, won the confidence and respect of the Soviets."[4]

In recognition of his services in Moscow, Nehru got Radhakrishnan elected as Vice-President of India in 1952 and the Government conferred, in 1954 the highest honour of *Bharat Ratna* on him. *Kama* (desire) in him having been aroused, the savant aspired to be the next President of the Republic when the election was due in 1957. But the more influential and cleverer Rajendra Prasad managed to get himself reelected and the Brahmin-philosopher failed to secure the coveted prize. "It was doubtless a great strain to Radhakrishnan", says Dutt, "to have been kept in suspence and a greater strain

it was to have been subsequently made to feel, much like Curzon in 1923, that he was dodged of his destiny."[5] Radhakrishnan thought of resigning but was advised by friends to have patience. At long last his burning ambition was fulfilled in 1962 when he rose to the highest rung of the ladder by becoming the President of India. He was hailed by his numerous admirers as the philosopher king described in Plato's *Republic* and the Indians expected the second "golden age" to come to fruition in his regime.

At the advent of Independence, Radhakrishnan had in a broadcast speech on August 15, 1947, warned people of "our domestic despotism, our intolerance which have assumed the different forms of obscurantism, of narrow-mindedness, and of superstitious bigotry." He had also pointed out the ills from which India suffered and to which it could fall victim after freedom :

> "Our opportunities are great but let me warn you that when power outstrips ability, we will fall on evil days. We should develop competence and ability which would help us to utilise the opportunities which are now open to us. From tomorrow morning—from midnight today—we can no longer throw the blame on the British. We have to assume the responsibility ourselves for what we do. A free India will be judged by the way in which it will serve the interests of the common man in the matter of food, clothing, shelter and the social services. Unless we destroy corruption in high places, root out every trace of nepotism, love of power, profiteering and black marketing which have spoiled the good name of this great country in recent times, we will not be able to raise the standards of efficiency in administration as well as in the production and distribution of the good life."[6]

Fine ideas indeed, more so when uttered by a Brahmin-philosopher :

The moral, economic and political conditions had already put on a dismal shape when Radhakrishnan became the Head of the State. With his momentous Independence eve declaration fresh in their memory, the people expected a new bright chapter to open in Indian history with his becoming Head of the Republic. But during the entire period of his presidentship the situation aggravated and the very evils against which

he put the country on guard raised their ugly head. Worst of all, barely a few months after he assumed the highest office the Indo-China war broke out and despite his vaunted philosophy he discreetly supported the dubious case of his government. But a stranger thing had yet to happen.

In a broadcast address to the Nation on August 15, 1965, Radhakrishnan in the characteristic Brahmin fashion, advised :

> "If we profess fidelity to the principles and institutions of the United Nations and use military power in our actual dealings to enforce our views, we will be condemned as hypocritics. If we believe in peaceful coexistence and not power politics, we should not look upon our enemies with disdain and we should not assume that we are always right and our enemies always wrong. We must achieve a world of law and free choice, banishing from it violence and coercion. Not merely charity, but humane, peaceful settlement of international disputes should also begin at home."[7]

Hardly one month later the philosopher-king witnessed a second war, this time between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. He easily forgot the axioms he had proclaimed; Hindu patriotism overrode perennial philosophy. He was second to none in holding that his country was absolutely right and Pakistan wholly wrong.

The tension born of guilty conscience could not but affect the physical and moral health of Dr. Radhakrishnan. He gradually ceased to be the old active and vivacious self and grew quite weak unable even to attend to his office routine. He talked incoherently and could not move about without support. Yet, unbelievably, the great propounder of the Gita in contemporary times, yearned to be reelected in 1967 for the second time to Presidentship. He did not succeed in this endeavour due to the opposition of scheming politicians and was forced to go into retirement.

Though both Rajendra Prasad and Radhakrishnan exerted tremendous influence on the thinking of the people and in strengthening their anachronistic beliefs and religious mode of life both desisted from actively interfering in the working of the administration or the affairs of the Government. Even when they could not see eye to eye with Jawaharlal Nehru on

some vital issues the Prime Minister enjoyed absolute power to fashion the destiny of the country in the way he desired.

In pre-independence days Nehru distinguished himself as an internationalist and an advocate of One World idea. He frequently reminded the Indians that no country could live in future in isolation and all nations had equally to share the responsibility for maintaining world peace and for extending the dimensions of economic freedom and social democracy. He welcomed the establishment of United Nations Organisation (UNO) as a first step towards creation of World Government. Oppressed peoples in many countries under alien subjugation looked to him as their champion and mentor. The liberals and progressives in Western democracies saw in him a rising star in the firmament of the emerging emancipated world.

But when Nehru came to power and despatched Indian armies to Kashmir to suppress the rebellion against the autocratic Maharaja whose misrule he had himself denounced in unmeasured terms only a year earlier, there was consternation among freedom-lovers all over the globe. Subsequently when he was confronted with the Security Council Resolutions on the Kashmir dispute, he behaved like any chauvinist castigating the UN for playing power politics of which few outside India could detect any trace. His foreign admirers got the first of the shocks he was to give them and felt despaired. Bertrand Russell was among the disillusioned and said that in a changing world Nehru's policy on Kashmir was highly discouraging. To many others the clay feet of messiah were no longer hidden. There were few statesmen of repute who had a word to support the Indian hero. This made Nehru all the more bitter and persistent in his condemnation of the UN. Partly in anger and dismay and partly because he had spiritual kinship with them he turned to USSR for succour and the Russian communists for their own reasons were too ready to welcome him. Then gradually, and steadily, the Indian affairs took a particular direction leading the country, as we shall see presently, to the brink of political and economic ruin.

The UN stands for certain noble ideals and it functions according to universally recognised rules. It tries to be a friend of the aggrieved and a hope of the victimised. It has

not always succeeded in its laudable aim of affording relief and has, unhappily, at times displayed timidity in implementation of its own resolutions. Enthusiastic supporters of One World idea have then felt despondent and victims of aggression bitter. Nevertheless, UN has stood for preservation of peace in a world constantly threatened by turmoil of war at one place or another.

The UN has to make inquiries into cases of alleged aggression brought to its notice, hear the parties to the dispute, sift evidence and pass verdict without fear or favour. Like a judge it has to be blind to the status of the disputants and hold the scales of justice evenly balanced. Its strength is not physical but moral. The influence of the organisation depends on how earnestly and sincerely its members uphold its prestige and carry out its decisions when called upon to do so.

Nehru wanted the UN Security Council to justify his high-handedness and anti-democratic action in Kashmir but that august body refused to oblige him. In order to achieve his narrow national ends he defied the Security Council and wittingly or unwittingly caused its impairment; and yet, strangely, he often bemoaned the enfeeblement and helplessness of the world body when in other cases where he wanted it to be firm while getting its decisions executed, it betrayed weakness to act.

In the field of Foreign Policy it is considered to have been a stroke of genius on Nehru's part to remain non-aligned or non-involved in a world divided into two implacably hostile blocs. Wisely did he blaze a new trail in international politics by declaring that India had chosen to remain uninfluenced by the quarrels of the two giants—USA and USSR—and would pursue the path of dynamic neutralism judging every problem on its merit and without taking sides in disputes of the power blocs. This policy served India well for a number of years enbling her to secure loans, gifts and technical know-how more or less from both power blocs. It also provided opportunity to rally many backward nations round the non-alignment concept. Nehru had toyed for sometime with the idea of Asianism and later on with Afro-Asianism. But the never-ending hostility between India and Pakistan compelled him

to gradually abandon neutralism in practice; he tended to incline towdards USSR for seeking her support though throughout his lifetime he continued to profess his faith in non-alignment. On several occasions in the fifties the Nehru Government acted in a way as to provide ample evidence for impartial observers to complain that while in case of Western democracies India had vigorously denounced the least arbitrariness in international sphere, when judging Russia's wanton aggression on smaller countries its reaction had been different. Suez and Hungary were cited as glaring examples of the two attitudes. But the Indian Prime Minister refused to admit till the last that he had even watered down his policy of non-alignment; he said he was as firmly attached to it as ever.

The non-alignment theory suffered discredit before it was matured. Not only India's untenable stand on Kashmir, Junagarh and Goa but also the recurring communal riots gave it a hard blow. How foreign countries, especially the Muslim nations, reacted has been described by M. R. A. Baig, formerly of the Indian Foreign Service, in his autobiography :

> "For an ambasasdor to project India as a truly secular state is by no means easy. My term in Iran was regularly punctuated by communal rioting and some really horrible facts were brought to the attention of the Government of Iran by the Pakistan Embassy. I was constantly being asked if the facts were true by the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, by journalists and others, and though I could play down the exaggerations, and play up other favourable factors, the fact that riots could take place so often with such intensity, and with every evidence of planning and organisation spoke for themselves."[8]

The rise of China as a Big Power wielding atomic weapons also mocked at the policy of non-alignment. China had never looked with equanimity at the expansion of India's influence in Afro-Asian countries. Though in 1954 the two contenders for leadership of Afro-Asian nations entered into a pact, known as the *Panch Shila*, to establish friendly relations with each other, the period of *chini-hindi bhai bhai* (Chinese and Indians are brothers) did not last long. When a war broke out in October 1962 over the disputed boundary line in the Himalayas, India was unprepared for it. The Chinese forces

swooped down from Himalayan heights to the plains in North East and the Indian soldiers ran helter-skelter. It was a crushing defeat for India. She has never been the same again after the incident. "At the moment", wrote historian Percival Spear in 1965, "India finds herself in an isolated position, committed to neither power bloc, faced with an unfriendly China, a hostile Pakistan, ringed with irritated neighbours and no longer regarded as the exponent of new international morality by the rest of the world."[9]

The little attraction left in the non-alignment concept disappeared with India's interefernce in the East Pakistan upheaval. Weaker nations and Muslim countries grew suspicious of India's intentions and her stock fell.

The post-Vietnam War situation in South-East Asia emphasised the growing political isolation of India in these parts. "Nations big and small", wrote T. J. S. George, *Hindustan Times* correspondent in Hong Kong, on March 12, 1973, "are earnestly groping for new policies and regroupings, but no one even refers to India."

Jawaharlal Nehru's achievements were, however, in the field of education, science and industrialisation. Success in these fields attended on him because his respect for Brahmim culture notwithstanding, he, at times, daringly opposed notions of orthodox Hindus.

Education has been placed in the concurrent list of the Constitution and both the Centre and the States can formulate plans and adopt measures for its spread at various levels. Enormous amounts were allocated in Central and State budgets by the Congress governments to establish new universities on Western lines and start primary and higher standard schools in remotest parts of the country and Inter and Degree colleges in towns and cities. Both sexes benefited by the liberal grants and hundreds of thousands completed highter education who could not have been able to do so in pre-1947 days. This is an achievement. Yet 27 years after Independence the percentage of literacy is not above 31 and 69 per cent of the Indians continue to remain in the dark sector totally illiterate. Why this is so will be discussed a little later.

Inspired by and under the guidance of Nehru three national academies—Sahitya Akademi (Academy of Literature), Lalitkala Akademi (Academy of Fine Arts) and Sangeet Natak Akademi (Akademy of Song and Drama)—were found to give impetus to the spirit of creativity in different fields of culture. As autonomous bodies the academies started well and did some useful work for a space rendering help to needy litterateurs and artists by providing them opportunities for unfoldment of their talent; indeed, many a budding genius would probably have faded before flowering but for the timely succour they recived from one or the other of the academies while directly or indirectly connected with it.

Though claiming to assist creative faculty without consideration of the nature of creation the Academies betrayed their short-comings by keeping at an arm's length non-conformists, however highly gifted; they were discouraged and in fact their productions were ignored, looked down upon and even ridiculed. This led to factions and the powers that be saw to it that only those patronized by the rulers were in complete possession of the academies. Imbibing the narrow spirit of Hindu Nationalism the academies fell from the lofty standard of humanist culture and assumed the role of an apologist of the Establishment. Consequently the real art in post-Independence era was born and has struggled to exist and develop, if tardily, outside the precincts of the academies. Nevertheless, for generating a sort of climate of refinement, for arousing interest in cultural activities and in multiplying the number of culture consumers the credit goes mostly to the three Academies.

Defying Gandhi's theory that science is evil, Nehru got well-equipped science laboratories established in different parts of the country where intelligent young men and women were trained on Western lines and afforded adequate opportunities for research. As early as april 15, 1948, the Indian Atomic Energy Act was adopted and soon after, Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) set up. The first atomic reactor called *Apsara* (Celestial Dancer) was opened with the generous assistance of Canada, at Trombay, on January 20, 1957. In subsequent years three more reactors were installed in different

parts of the country the last one at Narona in U. P. on January 13, 1974.

Participating in the scientific activities and guiding the progressive rise of the laboratories and reactors, were Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha (1909-1966), Dr. K. S. Krishnan (1898-1961), Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, Dr. D. S. Kothari (b. 1906), Dr. S. Chandrashekhar (b. 1910) and Dr. H. N. Sethna—to name only a few of the luminaries who made valuable contributions to the growth of scientific spirit in the country.

Through industriousness, extensive study and intense research at these centres, Indian scientists achieved one success after another culminating in an underground detonation of nuclear device on May 18, 1974, at Pokharan in Thar desert of Rajasthan. India was the sixth nation to have exploded a nuclear device but she had an edge over her predecessors in one respect. No other power had its first test conducted underground which requires a high degree of sophistication and technological expertise. A completely contained explosion as the one at Pokharan is a more complicated affair than an open explosion. Besides, its fallout, harmful to life of the nearby areas, was the minimum; Indian scientists insisted it was almost nil.

We shall later discuss the ethical and economic implications of the explosion but here it is permissible to underline that the successful experiment amply proved that there is no lack of talent in India; released from the suffocating hold of Brahminism Indian scientists and technicians can march forward and scale heights of knowledge like their counterparts in any advanced country.

Again, disregarding Gandhi's fads against industrialisation, Nehru set up the Planning Commission with himself as chairman, and got the First Five-Year Plan for social reconstruction of India prepared. In March, 1950, the Indian Government adopted a resolution declaring that the aim of planning was "to promote a rapid rise in the standard of living of the people by efficient exploitation of the resources of the country, increasing production and offering opportunities to all for employment in the service of the community." The goal was to be attained by the method of mixed economy; while private

enterprise was allowed to continue public undertakings to be run by the State were also to start and exist side by side; both were expected to contribute to the production of national wealth and thus usher in economic emancipation of the country without which political freedom was meaningless. Under Nehru two Plans were prepared, adopted and implemented; the Third Plan was in operation when he passed away in 1964.

India achieved a fair measure of success in the field of public investment—basic industries, power, transport and higher education. With foreign collaboration steel mills and other big industries were constructed in different parts of the country to produce both capital goods and consumer commodities. A degree of success was also achieved in pushing up the rate of savings in economy. Economist B. S. Minhas calculated that while in 1954-55 gross domestic savings as a proportion of gross domestic product stood around 10 per cent in 1964-65 it had grown to about 15 per cent

But this is all that can be said to be on the credit side of ledger of our planning; much more is on the debit side.

Nehru was obsessed with the idea of making India a "big power" in disregard of the fact whether or not the common man's lot bettered in the process. It was his consuming passion. The way that suggested to him for achieving the "bigness" was through industrialisation at any cost. Having been bitten with socialist bug early in life, he generally distrusted capitalists and entrepreneurs; he had pinned hopes on State enterprise and, therefore, paid greater attention to setting up public undertakings even when the government did not possess wherewithal for doing so.

When Nehru decided to build the public sector and rapidly expand it, he gave little thought to the non-availability of trained personnel to run it. He entertained the illusion that there were talented Congress leaders or favourite bureaucrats who could efficiently handle and manage any industry—big or small—which the Government proposed to start. Such a decision was unfortunate and bound to prove disastrous. When a number of public sector projects had been launched early in the sixties, US experts noted that the managerial structure was totally inadequate for the successful operation of large enter-

prises. These jaggernauts had become no more than government departments. The saddest failure related to the appointment of men who were unsuitable to run them.

In course of time, State undertakings came to be regarded as family enterprises. Nehru thought that only Congressmen could fully appreciate the social philosophy underlying the public sector. The managerial posts soon became consolation prizes for spent-up politicians, sinecures for retiring civil servants or stepping-stones for friends and relatives of big Congress high-ups. It did not occur to the leadership that political experience or official background are of little use in an industrial environment where innovation and creativity are the qualifications required for rapid expansion. As Minister of heavy Industry, T. A. Pai was forced to remark :

> "Wrong men in key positions in public undertakings and the ignorance of their crucial role, were responsible for the non-fulfilment of the economic goals of the Government. Industrial units functioned as civil service departments without the vitality of commercial undertakings."[1]

Matters became worse when the board of directors of a concern was also packed with friends of the celebrities in power or bureaucrats in good books of the ministers. In 1971-72 more than 30 top posts of nearly 20 undertakings lay vacant because Congress rulers were unable to find favourites to appoint. No wonder most of the undertakings suffered colossal loss and the country had to pay through its nose for the follies of the inefficient mercenaries or superannuated bureaucrats.

In his preoccupation with industrialisation, Nehru overlooked development of agricultural sector to the requisite degree. It was the most significant failure in shaping Indian economy.

India is an agricultural country and over seventy per cent of its people live on the produce of land. But the majority of those who cultivate the soil do not own it; the labour as tenants. During the days of Freedom Struggle Congress leaders made repeated and solemn declarations that after achievement of the freedom National Government would transfer ownership of land to those who till it. India has been free

for 27 years and the Congress party has been in power for all the period. But the pledge given to peasant masses remains unredeemed more or less in all the States.

Declaring wholesale transfer of land to tillers as impracticable the National Government conceived the idea of imposing ceilings on land-holdings and distributing surplus land among the landless peasantry. But the State governments dominated by landlords and their henchmen-politicians watered down the idea while implementing the scheme. In Haryana and the Punjab (except Pepsu areas) there is no ceiling on ownership. Ceiling on family basis was introduced in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Kerala, Mysore, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Delhi, Manipur and Tripura. In other States it was applicable to the holdings in the name of individual landowner. This enabled different members of the same family to own land upto the ceiling fixed. Statements were made in Parliament that pet dogs and horses declared as members of landowning families were alloted land under this plan.

The ceiling was placed unreasonably high and differed from State to State. In Andhra Pradesh it varied according to the quality of the soil from 27 to 324 acres, in Bihar 20 to 60 acres, in Gujarat 10 to 132 acres, in Maharashtra 18 to 126 acres, in Orissa 20 to 50 acres, in Uttar Pradesh 40 to 80 acres, in Himachal Pradesh 27 to 100 acres. The ceiling in respect of a family in Kerala varied from 6 to 20 acres, in Mysore 27 to 216 acres, in Delhi 24 to 80 acres.

With such high ceilings and misapplication of laws it was no wonder that at the end of the Third Plan period no more than 2.36 million acres were released by landlords and only 1.14 million acres were actually distributed among landless tenants. In some States landlords were made responsible for ensuring implemention of land reform legislation. In Orissa Raja S. N. Bhanjdeo who owned no less than 4000 hectares of land was nominated as chairman of the commission appointed by the State Government as a watchdog to see that land reforms were efficiently executed.

Some of the cultivable land belonging to the State which could have been given to landless peasants without difficulty or delay was grapped by nationalist leaders wielding influence

in Government circles. A good chunk of the surplus land vacated by old kulaks was also skilfully taken over by wealthy people under land reform regulations. A new absentee land-owning class has thus arisen in Independent India besides the old hereditary landlord class.

There is no gainsaying the fact that landownership problem is beset with enormous difficulties. Nevertheless, on its equitable solution depends the future of India.

As early as November 28, 1949, Jawaharlal Nehru thundered in a conference of agricultural officers of the States in New Delhi. "I want to make it perfectly clear that whatever happens, whether there is a cyclone or an earthquake, we are determined to stick to the deadline of 1951, after which we shall not import foodgrains". Twenty-five years after this categorical declaration was made India continues to import every year foodstuffs by millions of tonnes.

Though as early as 1954 Nehru declared that not a grain will be imported from abroad to feed the people, the net imports of foodgrains during the First Plan were of the order of 12 million tonnes. In the Second Plan period these imports jumped to 17 million tonnes. Subsequently scarcity of food-stuffs became worse and the record of the Third Plan was even more dismal. Besides importing substantial quantities of cotton and jute, India imported nearly 26 million tonnes of food grains during the period. Nehru had, however, passed away nearly two years before the Third Plan completed its life on March 31, 1966.

With hostile China and unfriendly Pakistan across the border and some other nations, big and small, distrustful of, if not opposed to her, India had to spend a large slice of its budget on defence forces and purchase of huge military hard-ware. It is depressing, though not surprising, to find that instead of checking chauvinistic tendencies members of the Parliament, most of them devotees of the Apostle of Non-Violence, should readily vote for ever-increasing amounts for purchase of weapons of massacre. The Defence Budget which started with barely 50 crores in the year of Independence and rose to Rs. 425.3 crores in 1962-63 touched the figure of 1404.28 crores in 1972-73 leaving no more than 1271.45 crores for nation

building departments.

The excessively praised Guptas had profitted by the political institutions evolved and established during the period of Buddhist Revolution, to maintain stability and integrity of the Indian subcontinent. Yet after they had succeeded in doing so, because of their desire to strengthen Neo-Brahminism, they eroded the same institutions thus preparing the ground for general apathy, lawlessness and chaos. The Congress Government has been faithfully following this line.

No sooner was administrative stability restored and constitutional government established than the nationalists embarked upon oblitering the memories of the Western (and modern) influence which seemed to militate against ancient Hindu culture. The axe fell on English language which was not forgiven for having unified the country and created the Indian nation out of a medlay of linguistic and ethnic groups. Nor was the importance of English as an international language and therefore of great utility to free India, given any serious thought. Curiously the socialists formed the vanguard of *Angrezi hatao* (remove English) forces which of course included nationalist of all hues.

Next to be distroyed were the statues of British rulers installed at public places which reminded the nationalists not only of the days of foreign domination but of the exotic culture which aimed at transplanting Brahminism. To prove the intensity of their patriotism political workers vied with each other in breaking the status of Englishmen irrespective of the record of their doings. Even the statues of Sir Thomas Munroe (who, it will be remembered, was called a *rishi*) was not spared. Ungratefulness had no limits. Nothing could be more vulgar and uncivilised; yet not even the smallest finger was raised by Gandhian moralists to stop this patriotic vandalism. Nehru connived at it when he did not encourage it.

The desire to obliterate the historic memories was not confined to the sphere of statues and monuments. It extended to the names of towns and streets and institutions. Hundreds of roads, colleges, schools and libraries bearing the names of the British were rechristened. Sometimes the change effected was ludicrous, for instance when Curzon Road in Delhi was

renamed Kasturba Road or the Sandhurst Street in Bombay was given the new name of Dayananda Saraswati Street. Recording its emphatic protest at such changes the Bombay Historical Society described it as "vandalism and perversion of historical monuments." The society pointed out in a resolution that in the past roads were named after personalities who were "instrumental in the development of the city." Expressing strong disapproval in particular at the move to rename Sandhurst Street after Swami Dayananda, the resolution protested that Lord Sandhurst after whom the road was named was Governor of Bombay during whose regime the Improvement Trust was established. "The Trust" ran the resolution, "effected a tremendous amount of improvement in the health and appearance of the city and raised it to its present level as the first city of the East. Swami Dayananda had to do nothing either with the development of general welfare of the city." But the Society's dissent was a voice in wilderness; fanaticism has scant regard for historical truth.

The invincibility of the British Empire partly rested on the efficiency, loyalty and character of the Indian Civil Service which had been gradually built up during the entire period of the British Raj.

The gifted and highly trained men of the Civil Service had in the nineteenth century ended anarchy and disorder and, through a number of social and political reforms, pulled out the Indians from mediaeval darkness bringing light and sunshine in their life. The Congress hated the Service merely because during the days of satyagraha agitations the ICS men remained loyal to the British rule, ably discharged their responsibilities, did not not flinch and did not allow the country to go to pieces. Nehru had deep grudge against these conscientious men. He had contemptuously referred to them more than once in *The Discovery of India.* His main complaint seems to have been that they restrained Congress leaders in power in the provinces, after 1937 elections, from becoming partisan and indulging in sharp practices. When, therefore, he became Prime Minister of Independent India he often publicly denigrated the Service though, at the same time, he realised that without cooperation and assistance of ICS men

he could not hold India together for even a day.

On the morrow of Independence almost all the colour-conscious or self-respecting British members of ICS relinquished their jobs and returned home. The Indian members had either to volunteer for premature retirement or adapt their character to the circumstances growing worse year after year under Congress rule. With the exception of an honourable few they opted for the later alternative. "Instead of devoting their time and energy to the work entrusted to them", wrote C. N. Chandra, himself a former members of ICS, "their (left-over ICS men's) sole aim was to please their ministers."[10]

Among the educated Indians who imbibed the values of Western culture and British administration the best were ICS who had been caught young and given an intensive training in England. They were looked upon as finest specimens of a high culture and cream of Indian society. Nobody could believe that these men could deviate from the path of rectitude after the British had to quit India. Yet under Congress rule the ICS men failed to pass the test and come up to the expected standard; all the glitter of the advanced culture vanished and they readily conformed with Hindu Nationalism. "To members of the Services, including the ICS apart from a few individuals, the new administrative concepts were not as unpalatable as I had assumed they would be", lamented N. B. Bonarjee, another notable ICS officer who served under both the British Raj and the Congress rule. "With the liquidation of the ICS as a British Service clearly close at hand, the residual few hundred Indians were automatically realeased from the discipline, conventions and inhibitions of what was essentially an exotic service with an exotic code of conduct. A few perhaps desired to retain something of this imported administrative dharma, but I began to realise at this time that the majority sought a definite break from the immediate past."[11]

The victory of Hindu revivalism coupled with Nehru's unrestrained condemnation of ICS speedily brought out the inborn faculty of the Indian members of the service. Explaining the change in the conduct of left over ICS men, Bonarjee remarked :

> "Personal friendship, family relationship and caste affiliations have always been held in particularly high place in Indian estimation but the tendency to indulge them at the expense of official duty had been kept in the background as long as the ICS remained a British Service. Now, however, the tides of change broke through the weakened barriers and with the passage of time became so powerful that even in a public generally in favour of the exercise of extraneous influences in administrative matters a good deal of criticism had been aroused."[12]

Why did the change for the worse come over the ICS men so speedily ? Bonarjee answers :

> "Great Britain's effective dominion of about a century and a quarter was only one of the many stones cast by destiny into the 4000 years old pool of India's history. Its first consequences, it is true, went deep though not wide, but with the passage of time they became more and more superficial as the ripples and circles spread outwards."[13]

Revealing the real cause of the degradation of Indian ICS men, Bonarjee concludes :

> "It is the Hindu ethos, Hindu Dharma, call it what you will, that the key to an understanding of the free India will be found. Why should it not be frankly conceded that Hindu administrative ethos must differ fundamentally from British since it is deeply in India's past. A public service as an institution with a duty to the people in general is not an Indian creation."[14]

If Bonarjee was referring to India's Brahminical past his statement is unexceptionable. But had he kept the period of Buddhist Revolution also in view he would have in fairness qualified his remark to at least a certain extent.

May that as it be, with the restraining force of ICS removed, the Congressmen, coming into their own, from top to bottom of the administration openly indulged in speculation, bribery and nepotism. Even in the lifetime of Nehru corruption assumed dimensions which became repellant. His best favourites in State Governments were with his knowledge and acquiescence known to have amassed fortunes while in power. "Nehru became an umbrella", says Inder Malhotra, one of his disillusioned panegyrists, "under which all kinds of small men, big

scoundrels, opportunists, time-servers and slimy characters flourished and prospered. He not only suffered fools gladly but rewarded inefficiency, mediocrity, even treachery and ingratitude with high office combined with a virtual license to mint money."[15]

Under pressure of public demand official enquiry commissions were instituted to examine charges against at least four of Nehru's favourite chief ministers, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed of Kashmir, Pratap Singh Kairon of Punjab, Biju Patnaik and Hare Krushana Mehtab of Orissa. All were found guilty of using political power and position to unlawfully acquire property and wealth. Scores of other ministers were proved to be corrupt. The Congressmen who had during the days of Freedom Struggle posed as images of self-abnegation and incorruptibility did not wait long after Independence to cash their "sacrifices" for motherland and its people.

Thousands of Congressmen who had courted imprisonment under Mahatma's leadership were granted life-pensions for which there was not only insistent demand but also unseemly scramble. The favourite and obstreperous ones among the "freedom sufferers" who had approach in higher echelons of leadership got more lucrative and comfortable berths as governors, ambassadors or in Congress cabinets. The number of ministers in a State Cabinet was not calculated on the basis of real needs and demands of governmental work but was counted with an eye on appeasement of former satyagrahis hungry for power and pelf. Rifts in Congress leadership which became common while distributing spoils of office, were patched up by increase in the number of ministers to accommodate all factions and leave out none disgruntled. This process reached a climax in the state of Bihar in 1973-74 when no fewer than forty-six ministers formed the Congress government to enable the chief minister to have backing of different party factions in the legislature. Patriotism was everywhere on sale and bargaining consumed most of the time of Congress High Command. In 1963, D. Sanjivayya, Congress President, sadly confessed that "one of the reasons for loss of (Congress) prestige was that Congressmen who were paupers in the pre-Independence era had become millionaires, some of them owning

many cinema houses, huge properties, a fleet of cars and many transport lines."[16] The cant and sanctimony with which Gandhists were overlaid in pre-independence days had worn off and the Hindu ethos had come out in its true colours.

The influence of Brahmin doctrines on Congress policy and administration was conspicuous in the continued maltreatment of low caste Hindus whom the Constitution had grandiloquently declared to be free of the stigma of untouchability and to be equal in every respect with upper caste Hindus.

The scheduled castes form 14.6 per cent of the country's population. Gandhi gave them the unreal name of *Harijans* (men of God) thinking thereby the stigma of untouchability would vanish but in actual life it was sarcastically referred to by arrogant privileged Hindus and only added to the misery of the forsaken millions.

On the eve of Independenee, Dr. Ambedkar was worried about the future of the disinherited and the downtrodden. He asked a number of pertinent questions :

> "What will be our fate in free India ? I posed that question before Gandhiji and other Congress leaders. We wanted to know, what would be our position in their "swarajya." Will our persecution end ? Will our children get the facilities for education ? Will our people be able to live as free citizens in free India? Will exploitation or oppression end ? Will the honour of our women be safe ? Neither Gandhiji nor any other leader answered these questions in a satisfactory or straight-forward manner."[17]

The developments during the twenty-seven years of Independence provide the answer.

Nehru offered Ambedkar a seat in his first Cabinet as Law Minister which he gladly accepted. Brahminism was playing the old game of adjusting itself to latest social developments without yielding on the basic principles. Ambedkar was made the chairman of the committee appointed by the Constituent Assembly to draft a constitution for free India. An untouchable was raised to the exalted position of lawgiver of contemporary Hindu society; he was called the modern Manu. As Dhananjay Keer, his biographer, later remarked :

> "An untouchable who was kicked out from carts and segregated in schools in his boyhood, who was insulted as a professor and ousted from hotels, hostels, saloons and temples in his youth as a British stooge, despised as a heartless politician and devil, hated as a reviler of the Mahatma and decried as an executive councillor, became now the first Law Minister of a free nation and the chief architect of the Constitution to define the will, aim and vision of India.[18]

But Ambedkar had to learn to his cost that the magnanimous gesture did not alter the fundamental character of Brahmin society which continued to be the same as before. The republican constitution for Independent India was ably drafted under his guidance. He piloted it through the Constituent Assembly which finally adopted it, with changes here and there, in November 1949. This was Ambedkar's most glorious hour and he seemed to have become the hero of Nationalist India. But the victory was illusory.

Sounding a grave warning Ambedkar said in the Constituent Assembly :

> "On January 26, 1950, we will have equality in politics and inequality in social and economic life. We must remove this contradiction at the earliest moment, or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up."[19]

When in 1951 the Hindu Code Bill was introduced in the Parliament the contradiction between profession and practice of Congressmen, legacy of Brahmin culture, was brought home to Ambedkar. Nehru, scared by opposition of orthodoxy, lost nerve and suggested compromise after compromise. Ambedkar unable to countenance the weak-kneed policy resigned. In a statement explaining his decision, he gave several reasons for doing so. One of them was that Nehru did not have the earnestness and the determination required to get the Hindu Code Bill through. Ambedkar went out as a very disappointed man. A more clear-headed rebel could have anticipated this fate by sharing power in a basically anti-progressive Government composed of Hindu nationalists. On September 2, 1953, he made an amazing statement. Speaking

on a Bill he pointed out many defects in the Indian Constitution. The Hindu leaders promptly reminded him of his authorship of the document. He was caught in the orthodox web. "We have", he retorted, "inherited a tradition. People always keep on saying to me, 'Oh you are the maker of the Constitution.' My answer is : "I was a hack. What I was asked to do, I did much against my will." When the hecklers persisted, he burst out explosively : "my friends tell me that I made the Constitution. But I am quite prepared to say that I shall be the first person to burn it out. I do not want it. It does not suit anobody." These remarks only proved that Ambedkar's decision to share power with Congressmen was neither prudent nor farsighted.

Nevertheless, untouchability had been banned in the Constitution and in 1953 the Untouchability offences Act was passed by Parliament. Under the Act a Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was appointed to report every year to Parliament on the progress made by the disinherited of the Indian Society.

In a survey conducted in 1972 after 25 years of Independence by the United Press of India it was revealed that "in many places Harijans are denied access to wells and temples and some places they are not allowed to use the common highways. They cannot get a barber to shave them. Burning of Harijan huts, murders and persecutions, organised social boycotts and rapes still continue in the rural areas of some states." The survey noted : "A total of 1100 Harijans were murdered in three years from 1967 to 1969 according to the statement of Union Home Minister."[20] In the Rajya Sabha the Minister of State for Home said on December 14, 1972, that there were 1541 cases of atrocities on Harijans during this period."

In his 20th report for the year 1970-71 the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes giving his "considered view" stated that these backward sections of the society "have not been able to derive the benefits of the socio-economic progress in the country to appreciable extent. In fact that gap which was already fairly wide at the time of securing political freedom has continued to became wider and wider." The Commissioner said that the mere explanation that untouchability

being a deep-rooted social custom, will take time to disappear can no longer satisfy the scheduled castes. In his opinion "the most important requirement is to bring about a change in the thinking of all concerned, be that Government and at the people's level so that a sense of commitment is created in them."[22]

Meanwhile, so indifferent are the nationalist leaders to the welfare of the lowliest of the low Indians that for five years 1966—1971 the Parliament did not care to ask for the reports of the Commissioner nor did the Government consider it their responsibility to secure them.[23]

On December 6, 1973, a group of untouchables including women with babies in arms set out in Vellore with ladders and jars of tar to deface the word "Harijan" from all signboards in the town.[24] It was symbolic of the disillusionment of the dispossessed with Gandhian idealism.

Many years after independence it became manifest that the Congress Government had not succeeded in implementing its slogans in any field, domestic or foreign. The failure was writ large on the gloomy face of Mother India.

As Nehru advanced in years and was faced with some frightening problems, mostly his own creation, he sought refuge in the Vedanta and in persons claiming supernatural powers. He took delight in sitting at the feet of a woman ascetic, one Anandamayee Maa of Banaras, reputed for performing miracles, to seek inspiration and solace to his tormented soul. Frustration had rendered him insensitive to the offensive atmosphere in which religious zealots have their being. "I felt no magic coming from Ananda's (Anandmayee Maa's) persons, and no particular emotion", said Arthur Koestler who was curious to find out the truth about Hindu saints and spent one year meeting and studying some of them. "The whole scene (in Maa's room) gave me a feeling of acute distress, and I began to tip-toe towards the door."[25]

For sixteen years Jawaharlal Nehru like a colossus bestrode the country presiding over the destiny of the people. But in 1963 he was physically and mentally, a ghost of his old self. Every setback gnawed at his soul. In particular the failure to wean away Kashmir Muslims from their pro-Pakistan

inclinations and the humiliation of defeat at the hands of "Brother" China gave a shattering blow to this robust health : the darling hero of Hindu Nationalism worn-out, depressed and dejected passed away on May 27, 1964, of a stroke. The historian Percival Spear draws a pathetic picture of the dying titan :

"The knell of Nehru's India was sounded by the China incident of November 1962. It marked, in a resounding way, the end of Nehru's dream of pan-Asia leadership and it came just when India's great effort at industrial expansion was flagging, when population was overtaking the increase in the national product's, when India's stock in the international field was declining. For Nehru himself it was a mortal blow. For the next eighteen months he was a stricken giant, evading, it is true, attempts at foreign interference while taking unfettered foreign aid, but groping in the dark for new policies which would not come."[26]

40

Under the Congress Raj (iii)

EROSION of constitutional democracy, inefficiency in administration, deterioration in economy and fall in moral standards took a faster pace under Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi (b.1919), who assumed premiership early in 1966 on the sudden death of Nehru's successor, Lal Bahadur Shastri (1904-1966) at Tashkent on January 11, 1966. Taught and trained by her father with the conscious purpose of providing a capable leader to the nation, Indira inherited many traits of Nehru's character. She, however, excelled him in some respects. More tactful, more decisive and more determined though less scrupulous than Nehru, she does not lose temper and has the capacity to patiently listen to the bitterest criticism by her opponents. Conceited like her father but more accommodating than he, she weathered many storms to maintain herself in power. In utilizing revolutionary slogans to achieve popularity while undermining the pillars of freedom, she has proved a past master.

Indira Gandhi came to power when Congress stocks had fallen very low. In the general elections of 1967 the party lost heavily giving rise to non-Congress multi party coalition governments in some States though at the Centre Congress continued to hold office with the support of communists and some other leftists. It caused a veriety of problems, the embittered Centre-State relations being one of the toughest.

Many political analysts entertained doubts if the woman Prime Minister would be able to cope with the situation.

But Indira Gandhi knew how to bide her time. She accurately diagnosed that a group of backward-looking, short-visioned and narrow-minded bosses nicknamed the "Syndicate", though heartily disliked by the new generation, were having the stranglehold of the Congress organisation; they stood, she realized, as stumbling blocks on the path to progress, disallowing any radical change in the status quo; therefore to remove them from the domineering position was her first task, she concluded. Would the people support her ?

Before Indira Gandhi headed the Government, she was known to be a sober person with balanced views—rationalist, non-religious, non-communal and progressive, critical of both communism and capitalism trying to remain at the centre of the road. She had already, as President of the National Congress, proved her capacity of leading a party and, as Minister of Information and Broadcasting in Shastri Government, of ably conducting the administration. When therefore, she started clearing the Augean stables the people gave clear indications that they stood by her side. The first tussle between her and the Syndicate took place in August 1969 at the election of the President of India. The Congress bosses nominated Sanjiva Reddy, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, as the party candidate with Indira's full consent; indeed, she officially proposed the name of Reddy and, as token of her agreement, signed his nomination papers. But a few days later finding that the time was ripe for parting company with the Syndicate whose loyalty to her she doubted, she, without any qualms, supported a rival candidate, V.V. Giri, and launched a vigorous campaign to get him elected. For the first time observers noted her unscrupulousness and disdain for moral principles. Giri won though only with a small majority but it showed the tide had begun to turn against the Syndicate.

Encouraged thus, Indira Gandhi adopted some measures, notably nationalisation of fourteen big banks against the wishes of the Congress bosses. She deprived Morarji Desai, Deputy Prime Minister and one of the towering figures of the

Syndicate, of the important Finance portfolio which he took as his personal humiliation and resigned from the Cabinet in protest. There was a furore at these swift developments in the country. But confident of being able to take a risk, Indira Gandhi dissolved the Lok Sabha on December 27, 1970 and confronted the country with a mid-term election. She fought with the enticing slogan *garibi hatao* (abolish poverty) and the nation warmly responded to her call. She won at the hustings with a two-third majority which was beyond even her own expectation. The Syndicate was routed and all her opponents reduced in strength.

Indira Gandhi's star was rapidly ascending. The West Pakistani crackdown on East Bengal almost coincided with her assumption of absolute power at the Centre. The glorious victory in December 1971 Indo-Pak war raised her prestige sky-high. She became more charismatic than her father. A few months later, with renewed emphasis on *garibi hatao* plank she ordered general elections in a number of States and secured impressive victories. She was now in full control of Indian politics and administration with all power she needed to change the destiny of the country.

For her indomitable courage, progressive outlook, concern for have-nots and capacity to take prompt and firm decisions she endeared herself to the people, big and small; she became particularly popular among the youth and women. She had raised fresh hopes of deliverance from wretchedness in the minds of a frustrated and disenchanted people. The Indian nation reposed complete faith in her leadership. Her opportunity to perform a miracle had come.

In the fight against the Syndicate, Indira Gandhi, unfortunately, chose either sycophants, or pro-Russian Indian Communists (CPI) and their fellow travellers within the Congress as her chief allies who took fullest advantage of the situation to gain key positions in the Government and the party organisation. Imperceptibly, the half-baked radicals managed to surround her and became her chief consultants. Though she hotly contests it she became a virtual prisoner in the hands of charlatan advisers and no important measure was adopted or policy pronouncement made without their prior agreement.

In a pamphlet entitled *A Review of Communist Party Policy From 1947* which appeared in October 1969, the author, S. Mohan Kumaramangalam, then a member of CPI, pleaded for a united front of the bourgeoisie and working classes to fight antinational forces. He suggested that intelligent communists should infiltrate into the Congress and try to capture strategic positions. He earnestly proposed that "...in carrying it (the united front) forward, the working class, by showing itself to be the most resolute and consistent fighter for the effective and full implementation of this programme, would more and more occupy a position of influence and ultimately of leadership of this front." Indicating the designs of CPI, Kumaramangalam went on to predict that "in the last analysis, the decisive force can only be the Communist Party." Himself following this path he became not only an adviser of Indira Gandhi but also an important member of the Cabinet in 1972. Another communist, K.D. Malaviya, who had been kicked out of the Government in Nehru's regime, was taken back in 1973 in the Cabinet by Mrs. Gandhi. A few fellow-travellers too warmed their way into the affections of the Prime Minister and achieved prominence in the Congress.

With the legislative apparatus at her command, Indira Gandhi took one step after another arbitrarily to run the administration and introduce changes in economy in disregard of the consequences that were bound to follow. Under communist inspiration she began to believe that nationalisation is a *sine qua non* for economic growth and for amelioration of the lot of poverty-stricken masses. If nationalisation of one sector failed to produce the expected result, instead of pausing to rethink the matter, she saw solution in nationalisation of allied sectors. It certainly did not take India to the goal of a welfare state which the Congress had set before the country but to eversoaring prices, galloping corruption, growing unemployment and public groans. Strong criticism began to be voiced in the Press in which the traditions of independence fostered by the British still prevailed. Reluctant to accept the follies committed by her, the Prime Minister attributed even honest though forthright criticism to malice of the newspaper-

owning capitalist supporters of the erstwhile Syndicate. "Newspapers are working as trumpets of their masters", she repeatedly cried. She hinted that their ownership would be diffused and brought in legislation to that effect.

Indira Gandhi's plans met with heavy weather. Riding rough shod over the Constitution, she nationalised, as already referred to, a number of banks and curtailed the previleges of the former princes which had been solemnly guaranteed to them when they yielded their realms. Some of the measures were turned down by the Supreme Court as ultra vires of the Constitution and violative of the clauses dealing with Fundamental Rights. She decided to get the clauses amended by the Parliament to enable her to act as she wished, but the Supreme Court in the famous Goalaknath case held that Parliament is not entitled to do so. Her leftist colleagues then suggested that the Court may be packed with judges committed to the philosophy of the ruling party.

Indira Gandhi had arrived at a critical juncture in her career. Would she uphold the dignity and independence of the Judiciary or make it subservient to the executive ?

In a democracy Judiciary is the watchdog of the people's rights and when it ceases to be independent and functions under the influence of the executive, democracy becomes lifeless and must degenerate into despotism and dictatorship. "The judge has not only to do justice between man and man", Winston Churchill has held, "he also—and this is one of the most important functions considered incomprehensible in some large parts of the world—has to do justice between the citizens and the State. He has to ensure that the administration conforms with the law and to adjudicate upon the legality of the exercise by the executive of its power."[1]

Since Independence, the Supreme Court had fully cooperated with the Congress Government in upholding challenged legislations and other orders which did not contravene the provisions of the Constitution. But if a law or a measure offended the Constitution, as was the case with violation of Fundamental Rights and arbitrary curtailment of princes' privileges, the Court was bound to reject it. J. Subba Rao, a former chief justice of India, describing the position explained :

"The Judiciary gave real support to the legislature in its attempt to bring about a new social order where there will be justice, political, social and economic, in terms of the Directive Principles of the Constitution. But it prevented unconstitutional action by the legislature and the arbitrary action of the executive and directed them through the channels of democracy and the rule of law. For, under the Indian Constitution, means is as important as the end. Indeed, both are inseparable parts of the social change. This judicial check, the men in power do not like."[2]

Indira Gandhi and her leftist colleagues resented the restraints put on the Government as high handedness of the Supreme Court. They started a vilification campaign against the Judiciary and demanded that it should be committed to a progressive philosophy, meaning thereby the ideology of the ruling Congress. "In no other democracy", regretted N.A. Palkhivala, "do ministers malign the courts regularly in public as in India. In no other democracy is there such persistent talk in the ruling party about a 'committed' judiciary."[3]

In April 1973 the Supreme Court reviewed its previous judgement on Golakanath case and by a majority verdict ruled that the citizen's fundamental rights and freedom, as laid down in the Constitution, could not only be amended but also abrogated by Parliament without altering basic constitutional structure. A minority of judges, however, upheld the previous judgement. During the course of hearing of the case the Attorney General, appearing for the Union of India, expressely referred in open court, both orally and in writing, to the alternative of "political action" if the Supreme Court's ruling did not find favour with the Government.

Shortly after the fresh judgement was delievered, S.M. Sikri, the Chief Justice, retired from service, and according to 25 years old convention he should have been succeeded by the seniormost puisne-judge. But since the next three members of the Bench in line of seniority, J.M. Shelat, K.S. Hegde and A.N. Grover, were among those who had subscribed to the minority judgement they were superseded by their junior, A.N. Ray, who had supported the majority view favoured by the Government. On April 25, he was appointed Chief Justice of

India. It gave a shock to Indian democracy; the policy of having committed judiciary had begun to operate. There were protests in all parts of the country. In an unprecedented action, thousands of advocates and lawyers boycotted courts and held meetings condemning the out-of-the-turn appointment of A.N. Ray. The executive committee of the Bar Association of India said in a resolution that "the action of the Government is a purely political one and has no relation whatsoever to the merits of the appointment...The action clearly shows that the Government cannot tolerate or countenance an independent judiciary in India."

Presenting the Government's viewpoint Mohan Kumaramangalam, denied in the Lok Subha on May 2, the charge that the Government wanted to pack the Supreme Court with committed judges but nevertheless asserted that none could preside over the Supreme Court who did not appreciate the wind of change in the country. He claimed that it was Government's indisputable prerogative to take into account the social philosophy, politics and outlook of a man before appointing him for the highest post in the judiciary. What was more important, he emphasised, from the point of view of a Government keen to pursue progressive socio-economic reforms was "not the judicial integrity and legal experience of the person to be promoted as Chief Justice his opinions which are known to the Government." In simple words it meant that the highest judicial authority could be only a yes-man of the Government of the day.

In May, 1974, another case of supersession took place when Justice P.C. Pandit, seniormost judge of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, was passed over by his junior, T.V.R. Tatachari, who became chief justice. Pandit resigned. Once again the Supreme Court Bar Association protested and the Chandigarh lawyers stayed away from the courts for one day to express their resentment and anger. Frank Anthony MP warned in a public address that "once the judiciary loses its credibility—through commitment—people will take to the streets instead of to the law courts for redressal of their grievances." He alleged that already a number of judges were competing

with one another to join the bandwagon of commitment "in the name of instant socialism."

For the first three years of Indira Gandhi's rule India was without an economic plan. The Third Five-Year Plan had ended on March 31, 1966, and the Fourth Plan started in 1969. The interval came to be known as the period of "plan holiday." We have seen how fond Nehru was to give a socialistic turn to Indian economy. In the Fourth Plan the older objective of "a socialistic pattern of society" set by the first Prime Minister was interpreted as "the establishment of a social and economic democracy." The Planning Commission came out with the declaration that for planning in India "the basic goal is the rapid increase in the standard of living of the people" and "emphasis is placed on the common man, the weaker sections and the less privileged." The introduction to the Plan Draft explained : "The broad objectives of planning could thus be defined as rapid economic progress towards equality and social justice and the establishment of a social and economic democracy."

The Fourth Plan met with heavy weather only two years after it was launched. Prices of goods began to rise rapidly and not all the projects planned could be completed for want of funds. Some of them had therefore to be dropped or curtailed. A distinction had to be made between the core sector of the plan and the unimportant part of it. Characteristically, the planners decided that food, health and education did not fall within the core sector. The economy axe fell on social services and welfare needs of the common man, the heaviest blow invariably falling on the poorer classes. For example, there was 100 crore shortfall in education; it affected the spread of primary and middle level education by reducing the number of schools proposed to be opened in different parts of the country. The facilities at university stage outstripped the plan target. The same was the case in the sphere of health : neglect was pronounced in primary health centres and rural health services, as also in national small and malaria eradication programmes with disastrous consequences for the health of the low income groups who attend these centres for medical aid. In 1971 a facile and naive scheme called Minimum Needs Programme

was sketched to wipe off the tears of the downtrodden but was soon abandoned never to be heard of again; the scheme was declared as impracticable and wound up.

No one with progressive ideas can entertain any doubt that India's economic policies should have a radical orientation if they are to serve the toiling, teeming masses but what has actually happened all along under the Congress Raj is that the policies are only pseudo-radical, the sole aim being to burnish by sheer propaganda the image of the ruling party. "Radical rhetoric has become an affection", wrote B.G. Verghese, Editor, *Hindustan Times*, "a game, another gimmick, a promise of jam to-morrow even while inflation, corruption and economic stagnation are taking the bread out of people's mouths today."[4]

What happened to the new approach of the Fourth Plan? Dr. B.S. Minhas, a prominent member of the Planning Commission in 1973, posed the question and himself answered: "We are reaping a rich harvest of gains in terms of galloping inflation, food riots, general unrest and serious breakdowns of law and order in many parts of the Republic."

The Fifth Five-Year Plan which was launched early this year (1974) with fanfare envisages a total outlay of Rs. 43,411 crores of which the share of public sector will be Rs. 37,250 crores and that of the private sector Rs. 16,161 crores. From the outset economists have expressed grave doubts if such a huge amount will be available from government budgets or foreign aid. The figures have been inserted in the Plan not on calculations made on the basis of hard economic facts but on mere speculations by the planners. Moreover, the abnormal rise in the prices of commodities even during the short period intervening between drafting and adoption of the Plan has upset the calculations and rendered the figures undependable. Voicing the apprehensions of sober critics the *Radical Humanist* wrote: "The Fifth Plan may turn out to be the biggest tragedy in the short, unhappy history of Independent India." Pointing out its defects the monthly said: "The main element of unrealism in the Fifth Plan consists of a reckless overestimation of available resources. The planners felt, or were told, that it was quite essential to have a minimum growth rate of 5.5 per

cent. They manipulated figures accordingly."[5] The authoritative *Wall Street Journal* commented :

> "The Indian economists, who last year drew up the country's Fifth Five-Year Plan (1974-79) at least might have drafted it by using a set of "worst-case" assumptions. Instead, they made a series of absurdly optimistic assumptions about oil prices, food production and other factors. As a result the much-ballyhooed Plan has, in effect, been scrapped."[6]

Dr. Minhas who, as a member of the Planning Commission, unsuccessfully fought against romanticism in economic field was compelled to observe, after relinquishing the job in March 1974, that the F.fth Plan was "a bunkum of paper objectives" and that both the aims of removal of poverty and the goal of self-reliance were taking a "cruel beating."[7]

Like her father, Indira Gandhi assured the people of ending the need to import any grains from other countries. But, as before, inadequate attention was paid to agriculture. Land reforms did not proceed an inch further. When parts of the country suffered from a draught in 1971-72 larger imports of food grains had to be made. Finding that they were not available from USA the Indian Government approached USSR who lent two million tonnes enabling it to tide over the hard time. Happily in 1973 monsoon rains came in time and there were bumper crops in many states; but the scarcity of foodstuffs and the high prices continued to prevail. President Gita screamed in dismay : "Millions of people are getting inadequate food despite the country recording bumper crops. The long queues at the fair-price shope make a mockery of the whole system, and whatever food grains are supplied by these shops are adulterated."[8] On May 26, 1974, Union Minister of State for Agriculture announced that the Government proposed to import two or three million tonnes of wheat during the next few months.

Nehru started the myth that socialist pattern of economy is the most effective method of achieving prosperity; the private adventure in the field of production was not expressly opposed

but was discouraged. The mixed economy was the slogan. Borrowing astronomical sums from obliging developed nations of the West, chiefly USA, the Nehru Government recklessly spent on projects in public sector. During the eight years 1950-1957 India received from abroad a total of 1,325 million dollars in loans and grants. For the next two years, 1958 and 1950, America alone gave her a total of 622.7 million dollars. But while individual entrepreneurs were taking strides and the private sector was flourishing the public sector languished and showed colossal loss of money invested in it.

Fourteen banks were nationalised in 1970 with a political purpose. After three years of nationalisation it was realised that the change had belied the expectation raised. While the deposits of the nationalised banks grew only by 15.5 per cent in 1972, the private banks were able to increase their deposits by 17.8 per cent. The disparity in advances was more striking; private-owned banks advances rose by 13.2 per cent compared to the 4.1 per cent increase in the advances of nationalised banks. The advances of three largest nationalised banks—The Central Bank, the Punjab National Bank and the Bank of India—actually declined in 1972.

The Estimate Committee of the Lok Sabha expressed in April 1974 great disappointment at the failure of the nationalised banks to fulfil the major objectives of the State takeover such as lending to weaker and priority sectors, particularly agriculture, and removal of regional disparities in development of banking in backward areas. The committee voiced its dismay that even after five years the public sector banks have not been able to properly identify the weaker sections with a view to adequately covering them under the various assistance scheme.[9]

Today there are 86 undertakings in the public sector but many of them are run at a loss; the net loss in 1970-71 was not more than Rs. 3.37 crores; but 22 undertakings were running at a continous loss for three years; the loss in the period came to Rs. 36.92 crores;[10] It may be noted that while the public sector appropriated 60 to 65 per cent of the total investible funds, it accounted for only 3.5 to 6.3 per cent of the national

product. In contrast to this, the private sector which used the remaining 35 to 40 per cent of investible funds was able to produce no less than 87 to 92 per cent of the total national product.[11]

It is known that there is enormous wastage involved in public investment due to causes such as inefficient management, unutilised capacities and corruption at every level. In the three years (1966 to 1969) 35 to 55 per cent of the production capacity of 20 selected public undertakings remained unutilized.[12]

How ill conceived our policy of planning and the objective of "socialist pattern of society" have been may be realized by comparing the state of India's economy with that of some other developing countries which have achieved a far higher rate of economic growth in recent years than we have been able to do. "In the last two decades the per capita income in India increased by 21 per cent, while that in Taiwan it increased by 350 per cent, in Thailand by 93 per cent and in Malaysia by 60 per cent. It may be that these countries have not bothered about social justice and have tolerated inequalities of income, but the fact is that we in India have neither achieved a comparable rate of economic growth nor reduced (but have actually succeeded in increasing) income disparities."[13]

On August 15, 1947 when India achieved Independence there was no foreign debt. According to a statement made by Finance Minister, Y.B. Chavan, at the commencement of the First Plan on December 14, 1953, we had incurred a debt of Rs. 19.66 crores. By the beginning of the Second Plan it had risen to Rs. 117.74 crores and when we started the Third Plan it was Rs. 864.31 crores. The debt went up to the figure of Rs. 6,849.62 crores when the Fourth Plan was put into operation. On October 31, 1973 when the Fifth Plan was being considered the debt liability, including PL 480 funds, amounted to Rs. 9008.12 crores.

Early in 1974, the American Government as a gesture of friendliness, took a unique step in the annals of diplomatic relationship between two states, by signing an agreement with India foregoing the major part of the amount that had accumulated under PL 480. Mr. Moynihan, US Ambassador,

handed over a cheque for Rs. 1664 crores to the Indian Government symbolizing the transfer of the sum as grant to this country. Yet the outstanding liability to that country stood at Rs. 2561.95 crores on April 1, 1974. In total India has to pay a debt of no less than Rs. 7347.12 crores to other nations.

We have already paid, according to the Finance Minister's statement, an interest of Rs. 1689 crores on the debts. A further interest of Rs. 1078 crores will become payable by 1979-80.

Side by side with incurring huge loans, the Congress Government has been resorting to deficit financing to implement the Plans. Deficit financing which was Rs. 359 crores in 1970-71 jumped upto Rs. 710 crores in 1971-72 and Rs. 848 crores in 1972-73. Such reckless policy of financing schemes caused high inflation and produced an adverse impact on the price situation.

In the name of self-reliance, Minhas apprehended, India might become perpetually dependent on foreigners "the benevolent ones and the malevolent ones." "In regard to foreign aid, the country was being placed in the same position as the peasants who borrowed money from lenders and were never able to get out of their clutches."[14]

The Indian economists, other than the eulogists of Congress Raj, are generally of opinion that the condition of poorer classes has worsened after Independence! While the rich have grown richer the poor have become poorer. According to the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry which made a study of poverty at the end of 1969, out of the total population of 529.5 million, 218.3 million that is 41.2 per cent lived below the poverty line.[15]

"Two decades of planning for a socialist pattern", observed Kamala Suri, "has not brought any material improvement in the common man's level of living. On the contrary, he is decidedly worse off."[16] Supporting his statement with charts and authoritative facts and figures, Suri said that out of the totat rural population of 420 million some 70 per cent or 294 million (1968) live in "what must be described as conditions of abject poverty even by the admittedly low Indian standard."[17]

The per capita consumption of such people is not more than 74 paise. What is worse, the number of people "below poverty line" is growing year after year. While in 1960-61 they formed only 25 per cent of the population, in 1968 they had swelled to nearly three fourths of the population.

The condition in urban areas is no better. Suri disclosed that "50 per cent or 25 million can be described as absolutely poor with a per capita per day consumer expenditure of only 71 paise". Worst of all, he added, "there is still a large section of the population, 10 per cent in rural India and around 15 per cent in urban India—which could be described as the 'most poor' with a per capita per day consumer expenditure of only upto 35 paise."[18]

Mohan Dharia, Minister of State for Planning, admitted in the Lok Sabha on April 18, 1973, that there were about 37 million people in the country in 1968-69 whose daily consumption was 60 paise or less.[19]

Dr. B.S. Minhas has stated in his book *Planning and the Poor* that the proportion of people below the poverty line "may well be nearer two-thirds (66 per cent) rather than the estimated two-fifths (40 per cent) in 1967-68." Drawing a gloomy picture of things to come he says in a pessimistic tone : "Given the present conditions, it will make far more sense if the planners can assure the nation that the proportion of people below the poverty line in 1978-79 will be no more than what it was in 1967-68".[20] No heart-raising expectation indeed !

While estimating the income of the poverty-stricken classes one must keep in view the dwindling purchasing power of the currency. The Rupee was worth 99 paise in 1950, 80.6 paise in 1960 and 44.6 paise in 1970. It came down to 43.5 paise in the next two years and became 35 paise by June last year (1974).[21] "India has been living", noted Ronald Segal concluding his survey of economic situation in this country, "too long on a ledge of economic precipice frightened both to climb and to fall. But the ground is crumbling beneath her, and if she does not begin speedily to grope her way upwards she must soon fall below."[22]

Addressing a public meeting in New Delhi on April 15, 1973, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi confessed that the country was faced with a grave economic crisis : "The problem", she declared, "was bigger than India's struggle for freedom."[23] Seven months later on 18th November the general secretary of the Congress, Chandrajit Yadav, admitted in a speech at Gwalior that "the *garibi hatao* programme had not made headway and the people were experiencing acute economic distress owing to shortage of all essential items."[24]

There is widespread unemployment among both the illiterate and educated. It was stated in the Rajya Sabha on March 1, 1974, that the number of educated job-seekers in the country had risen from 20.53 lakhs in June 1971 to 35.25 lakhs in June 1973.

An analysis of the 1971 census data revealed that there was nearly thirteen million males without work in the age-group 20-59 which is the normal age-group of the working people.

According to the latest available statistics, in the capital city of Delhi alone 194981 persons were unemployed in 1973 of whom nearly 11000 post-graduate degrees and more than 22,000 were graduates; of these 5253 postgraduates and 7178 graduates were women.[25]

Thousand of engineers and technicians are idle and the Government is at its wit's end as to what to do with them. On the one hand there is loud lamentations that brain drain is increasing, talented youth are going abroad to seek fortunes and this process needs to be stopped, on the other, it is reported that no fewer than 109393 scientists (99189 graduates and 10114 post-graduates) are lying idle because no suitable jobs are available to employ them. No wonder and no regret that a gifted scientist like Dr. Hargobind Khurana who failed to secure a suitable job in his homeland was welcomed with open arms in the United States where his valuable researches in biochemistry of genes were widely acclaimed and crowned with the award of precious Nobel Prize in 1973.

Concluding their survey of the economic situation in the country in 1973, the UNI remarked : "The year 1973 passed into history as a dismal year of back-breaking prices, severe

food famine, acute shortage of essential commodities, galloping inflation, mounting unemployment and virtual economic stagnation."

1973 proved to be a very bad year indeed. The wholesale prices hit all-time high, an increase of 24.1 per cent retail prices went up by over 40 per cent and in some items as high as 60 per cent. In the case of food grains the increase was 22.3 per cent, the worst affected being edible oils group which recorded an increase of over 40 per cent. What caused deep distress to poorer sectíons was acute shortage of basic necessities of life, especially the food grains.

To meet the situation, the Central Government characteristically adopted the stupid measure of taking over the whole-sale trade in wheat in 1973 when the administrative machinery was wholly unprepared to efficiently shoulder the burden of monopolization of collection and distribution. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ridiculed the warning of saner economists that the step would only aggravate the problem of food shortages leading to large scale hoarding and profiteering. But undeterred the Government pushed ahead with its plan. As expected, it soon proved a miserable failure and the worst forebodings came true; wheat went underground and whetever produce the Government was able to procure could not be properly distributed partly due to inexperience and inefficiency but mostly due to corruption. At many places ration shops had no grains to supply to the needy people. Ironically, those very people profited by the arrangement whom the Congress leaders professed to hit and the poorer class suffered the most. The situation became so desperate that protest demonstrations and food riots occurred in many parts of the country.

In Gujarat in the beginning of 1974 students organizing under a newly-formed Navanirman Yuvak Samiti, headed a popular revolt against the Government for failing to provide rations to the people and for corruption in the administration. For more than a month an incessant fight took place between the agitators and the guardians of law and order. The whole State had risen like the proverbial one man. Curfew was clamped on Ahmedabad, Baroda and over a dozen towns.

When it failed to quell the disturbances the army was called out to deal with the situation. Hardly a day passed in February when police did not resort to firing sometime at several places and more than once on the same day. According to official estimates no fewer than 92 persons succumbed to the police bullets. Even after the Congress government bowed out of office and President's rule was imposed on the State the violent demonstrations and rioting did not abate for many more days.

Then the government realized its folly and in March 74 the order of taking over wholesale wheat trade was withdrawn. Admitting the failure of take over Mrs. Gandhi in a speech on April, 7, 1974 in Hyderabad confessed that "it is not possible to undertake such a tremendous thing." Hurriedly a new policy was conceived and promulgated before its implications were closely examined. It was not at all kept in view that over the years wheat had become an important determinant of economic stability. Now the pendulum of food policy went to the other extreme. Bowing before the wholesale traders the Government allowed them to freely purchase wheat from producers on the condition that 50 per cent of it could be handed over to the Government. The purchase price was raised from 76 to Rs. 105 and sale price to Rs. 125 per quintal. The new policy did not fare better; neither did the Government succeed in procuring adequate quantity of wheat for buffer stock nor did the price in open market stay at Rs. 125 per quintal; it rose to Rs. 200 and even above.

The wholesale dealers evaded the payment of 50 per cent levy on wheat they bought from farmers in grain *mandis*. Most of the sales were not registered and both the purchase and sale price went on rising and in May wheat was sold in the open (or black) market at Rs. 225 per quintal because the Government failed to control the price for want of adequate stocks to distribute through ration shops. While the suffering of poor consumers became acuter with every shift in food policy the unscrupulous traders made hay under the sun of mismanagement. A dealer told *Indian Express* correspondent

on May 31 that "he had never earned such a huge profit all his life as during the last 15 weeks."[26]

It is hardly surprising that under Congress regime unscrupulous businessmen contrived to amass unaccounted money by tons on which they paid no taxes yet managed to invest it in expansion of trade, commerce and business. According to Morarji Desai, former Finances Minister, "from Rs. 5000 crores in 1969 the black money in circulation had gone upto Rs. 11,000 crores now (1974) resulting in abnormal price rise."[27] A competing black economy running parallel to national economy thrived, contributing to soaring prices and shortages. The Government appeared helpless or unwilling to abolish or even control the black market.

When economy of a country stagnates social decay is not far off. Fall in per capita income and steep rise in price of foodgrains and other consumer commodities led to deterioration in living conditions. Malnutrition made the people prone to disease and early death. According to World Health Organisation India accounts for 83 per cent of small pox cases in the world at present. In Bihar and Eastern UP the disease spread in the epidemic form in early 1974 and claimed a toll of 30,000 lives; hundreds were blinded and maimed by the scourage. The socialist weekly *Janata* explaining the typical Hindu attitude wrote : "The death of thirty thousand people in a single State like Bihar might have shocked the conscience of the world. WHO might have pointed an accusing finger at Bihar as an epicentre of this dread disease but we as a nation are not going to be unduly exercised over it...Why should any one lose his sleep because of it. One god gives us children, the other god takes them away and there is precious little we mortals can do to check the divine cycle of life and death."[28] Sarcastic though these remarks are they reflect the real thinking of the Hindus.

A major setback has been suffered by the Indian scientists in their war against tropical epidemics like malaria, cholera, and leprosy and these diseases now threaten to strike back with a vegeance. Dr. C. Gopalan, Director-General of the Indian Council of Medical Research, warned on July, 10, 1974, that epidemics, would pose a grave challenge to health authori-

ties in the next five years. He revealed that there had been a dramatic revival of malaria with as many as one million cases reported during 1972-73."[29] Fall in death rate boastfully flaunted as indication of progress in national health has been arrested, Between 1969-72 the death rate has gone up from 14 to 16.9 per thousand persons.

41

Under the Congress Raj (iv)

TO an observer from outside India's conditions appear more serious and dismal. Writing editorially on February 22, 1974, the *New York Times* expressed the fear that "India, under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, is in danger of political and social disintegration." The paper said only two years ago, Mrs. Gandhi's popularity had gained new heights, surpassing even that enjoyed by her father, the late "revered" Jawaharlal Nehru. "After India's victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war, the Congress party had scored stunning victories in State elections across the country, routing a divided and dispirited Opposition. Her triumph raised effusive hopes that India would enjoy a new era of progress under strong, united leadership." But, the *New York Times* went on, "not surprisingly, given India's massive problems of over-population, underdevelopment and abysmal poverty the hopes have not been fulfilled." Another well-known periodical *Wall Street Journal* pessimistically commented : "For India, this is a year of crushing world price pressures, shattered economic plans, rampant inflation, stagnant productivity, most alarming of all-growing fears of approaching widespread hunger."

The fact of the matter is that our superb Constitution, our dazzling plans, our lofty objectives notwithstanding we have

no social policy, no foreign policy and no political policy; what the leaders give the country is slogans and yet more slogans which they think will carry the day with the gullible people. "Slogans have come to rule", said B.G. Verghese. "Worthwhile ideas have been pre-empted in new slogans and discredited by being caricatured in projection or aborted in execution... every new slogn has been sought to be clothed with respectability by giving it a pseudo-radical look. And so the competition in "radicalism", each new slogan being more 'radical' than the other to mask the preceding failure of implementation, each one less credible than the other because of lack of underlying will, purpose, preparation and organisation to carry it through."[2]

In such straitened circumstances when on May 18, 1974, India exploded a nuclear device the world was taken aback. Though the disenchanted common man was momentarily dazed he could not forget the overwhelming economic depression. But the Hindu nationalist leaders felt thrilled and exhilarated hailing the event as a "glorious feat" and "a gigantic stride". Some friends of India abroad in Afro-Asian lands and as far away as South America admired the achievement. "A nation harassed by massive economic problem", said the *Straits Times* of Singapore, "and remembering its humiliating defeat by China in 1962 must now walk taller."

The experiment provoked criticism on many scores the important being the colossal expenditure on it when India, passing through the ugliest economic crisis, could ill-afford it. Blinded by a sense of national pride and prestige leading journals joined the chorus of Hindu leaders in praise of the achievement but fearless critics were not totally absent. Typical among them was a thoughtful weekly of Delhi who admitting that "most Indians feel happy and proud" added sarcastically : "If the explosion did not bring down" prices of consumer goods and failed to increase production of goods vital to an ordinary bread-winner, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is not to blame." She has provided the circus minus the food, the weekly explained[3]. Franker, more caustic and biting comment came from an unexpected quarter. In an open letter Radhakrishnan, Secretary of Gandhi Peace Founda-

tion, could not refrain from castigating the Government at the detonation. The letter concluded : "The whole thing is a cruel joke on the people of this country still waiting for the day when they can be sure of two square meals a day, two small pieces of cloth to hide their shame and shaky roof over their heads."[4]

Immediately after the explosion a controversy raged over the cost that it involved. India minimized it. Dr. H. N. Sethna, Chairman Atomic Energy Commission, stated in a TV interview on 31st May the low figure of Rs. 30 lakhs as total expenditure which was at once challenged as ludicrous. Knowledgeable sources asserted that "India has been wasting billions of dollars on the atomic explosion."

That may be an exaggeration but it is difficult to deny the fact that India is the sixth country to have exploded a nuclear device. None of her predecessors—USA, USSR, UK, France and China—were in such a desperate economic situation as India is today when they launched on the atomic adventure. None of them was going round the world with beggar's bowl in hand to secure loans and aid to feed and clothe the starving millions. The remarks of critics, therefore, who scoffed and jeered at the explosion were not inept. The critics ridiculed Indian pride at the achievement and said that a more appropriate reaction would have been despair that such great talent of resources has been squandered on the vanity of power while 600 million Indians slip deeper into poverty. "Even the pro-India *Guardian* of London considered the step wrong and dangerous." The declaration by Indian Atomic Commission that a series of such detonations was under contemplation made the comments more caustic.

The motives of India in launching upon the atomic explosion were questioned. What made famishing India take up the hazardous path ? Evidently the five nuclear powers including China were far in advance in nuclear experiments to feel concerned about themselves by India's gate-crashing in to the nuclear club. By possessing nuclear arms India could only overawe the developing countries especially the neighbours who refused to accept her hegemony and abide by her desires. It is the same sickly craving to make the

nation "big and strong" which stirred Jawaharlal Nehru in his lifetime and is now rousing his daughter, that impelled India to detonate a nuclear device. But such "bigness and strength" is sheer mockery ! "Can a people", asked economic analyst, Balraj Mehta, "be weak, undernourished, sickly, their vitality sapped and the barest essentials of civilised living denied to them and yet the nation become strong."[5]

In reply to the hue and cry raised in the smaller nations the Indian leaders gave repeated and firm assurances that India had exploded the device to perfect her technology for peaceful purposes and there was no intention whatsoever of producing nuclear arms. In his TV interview Dr. Sethna emphatically said that India would never make nuclear bomb. He described as "absolute and utter nonsense comments in the Press and elsewhere that the underground explosion is a prelude to full scale development of nuclear weapons." Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in a number of statements assured the world that India had no ambition to wield nuclear armoury. In an interview with *News week* she pointed out that "India is not a nuclear weapon country and there is a difference between a nuclear country and a nuclear weapon country...India did not intend to use the nuclear knowledge of power for anything other than peaceful purposes." The Prime Minister post-haste deputed diplomats overseas to convince the critics of India's peaceful intentions. The best response they got was that "time alone would show." The apprehensions, however, raised in the minds of weaker nations persisted. They generally accepted the assurances at their face value but not without misgivings because the Indian credibility had come under severe strain.

Apart from the unhappy record of India in Kashmir it was well known that for over two decades Indian leaders had persistently refused to detonate a nuclear device and rejected without exception proposals of chauvinistic parties like Jan Sangh, in this behalf. During his pilgrimage to Hiroshima Nehru had admonished that "we must strive towards the goal of abolition of nuclear devices and disarmament." Even on April 20, 1970, Mrs. Indira Gandhi "rejected the plea in the Lok Sabha for nuclear explosion for (even) peaceful purposes."[6]

But barely four months later on August 2, 1970 an Expert Group was set up "to study technological and cost aspects if India were to make nuclear weapons."[7] Twenty-five days later the Prime Minister informed the Rajya Sabha that research was continuing for conducting a nuclear explosion.[8] Can the weaker neighbours be blamed if their misgivings were not allayed by plentiful Indian assurances ?

To develop and use nuclear technology for economic purposes is laudable and unexceptionable. Indeed no finger was raised against it during the many years when Indian resources were employed in setting up reactors. It is the explosion that gave rise to the outcry. Experts have said that detonation of nuclear device is not necessary for utilizing nuclear power for peaceful purposes. The step is essential for manufacture of nuclear weaponry. Canada which had earnestly helped to erect the first Indian reactor at Trombay never exploded a nuclear device and angrily complained that in her talks with Mr. Trudeau, Canadian Prime Minister, in 1971, Mrs. Gandhi had agreed with Canadian definition that the peaceful uses of nuclear energy did not include any nuclear detonation. Canadian Government was sore that India used the experience gained with Canadian assistance to produce the explosion.

Chinese added yet another plank to the raft of suspicion. Vice-Premier Teng-Hsiao-Ping was reported to have told a Japanese delegation in Peking on 5th June that "Russia was behind the recent nuclear test conducted by India." Attacking the Russian leaders he said : "Social Imperialism had aimed at creating division and tumult in South Asia through the blast but the test would not achieve this aim nor would raise Indian's international prestige."[9]

That Pakistan reacted furiously to the explosion is no surprise. But, besides Canada, friendly nations like Sweden, West Germany, Japan and Australia were angry. Small neighbours kept discreetly silent only throwing out hints of feeling perturbed. The reason for this, in the words of the *Indian Express*, was that the nations feel genuinely concerned that "the Indian experiment will trigger similar endeavours among the non-nuclear countries...It is obvious, however, that none of them is inclined to take assurances from the Govern-

ment of India's resolve to restrict the technology to non-military purposes."[10] The suspicion of the nations must have deepened when an unnamed Indian authority declared in London on May 22: "No Prime Minister of India and no Prime Minister in a comparable position in the world could ever totally rule out the possibility that there may have to be progression from peaceful use of nuclear energy to military application."[11]

It is noteworthy that the Jan Sangh which years back first demanded that the experiment be made at whatever cost and led the Congress Party on the warlike path has given a fresh slogan to the country. In a resolution passed on June 1, 1974, the working committee of Jan Sangh "strongly favoured manufacturing nuclear weapons with the object of developing a viable nuclear deterrant to protect our independence." If past traditions are any guide it should be only a matter of time when the Congress after denouncing the new slogan for a while eventually acts upon the advice of Jan Sangh.

There is every likelihood that the Indian experiment will inevitably compel one after another many countries to build up their nuclear arsenal and the elder members of the club may guide and help them in this endeavour. Panic-stricken Pakistan has already set the pace. It is expanding its Canadian built Kanupp reactor and contemplating to build more reactors to produce the necessary ingredients like uranium and heavy water which help in getting plutonium. Pakistan's Defence budget has been raised by Rs. 163 crores obviously to meet the extra expenditure for producing a nuclear explosion as early as possible. And if Pakistan is successful in the nefarious attempt no doubt countries like Iran, Egypt, Israel and Afghanistan may follow soon, and so on and so forth. The peace-loving India will thus have become instrumental in spreading greater insecurity, animosity and panic in the world than existed before she had denotated the nuclear device. A sober political analyst, R.L. Nigam, observed "It will be honester on the part of our present rulers to let the volume of their *shanti mantram* chants be lowered, if not muted. For, to go on repeating that we shall use nuclear power only for peaceful purposes is not an honest commitment

as it cannot be honoured in all circumstances, and it is certainly less logical than the Chinese stance that they shall not be the first to strike." Nigam opined "India does not need power and prestige so much as human sensibility and clear vision which point to the undeniable fact that Indian humanity can ill-afford to exchange for inedible nuclear mushroom their honest-to-goodness bread."[12]

Nothing could have more boldly underlined the dichotomy between the professions and practice of Hindu Nationalism than the detonation of nuclear device. After having sanctimoniously denounced nuclear tests and atomic explosions consistently for over three decades Nationalist India exultantly, though shamelessly, detonated a nuclear device when the country was passing through the ugliest crisis in its history in post-1947 era. Nevertheless it in no way violated the principles of Brahmin culture. Not for nothing did Gandhi's eminent disciple, Vinoba Bhave, support the explosion : "It is a logical consequence of India's age-long thinking on a synthesis between science and spirituality", he declared.[13]

With mounting resentment against widespread corruption, appaling inefficiency, distressing unemployment, soaring prices and scarcity of essential commodities, Mrs. Indira Gandhi went about the country accusing opponents of malice and claiming to have led the people on road to progress and prosperity. Addressing Congress workers in Hyderabad on April 7, 1974 she exclaimed : Not a single country of our size has achieved what we have achieved in any time of the history." If a tree is known by its fruits, the hard-hit people may be excused when they groan having tasted bitter fruits of the Congress rule nor may the opposition leaders be decried for exploiting the situation to their advantage because under a parliamentary system of government it is not an illegitimate way of effecting change.

One of the reasons of wide-spread political disturbances in the country is loss of confidence in the Congress party's sincerity to abide by the Constitution and the rules made under its provisions. Weakened by deteriorating economic conditions the Congress, uncertain of public support, started rigging elections in the States after 1972 which culminated in U.P. general election held in winter 1974. It was believed that con-

spiracies were hatched to defraud electors of free vote by several malpractices on the eve of election : granting allowances amounting to crores of rupees to subordinate officials; inaugurating scores of government projects; laying foundations of public utilities; transferring hundreds of officials reluctant to carry out irregular behests of Congressmen etc. Added to it was the allegation of collecting crores of rupees from businessmen as donations which were utilized to purchase votes or spent on publicity and propaganda. These were instances of misuse of power to defeat the objective of free election. Even so, the Congress won the majority of seats in the U.P. State legislature by securing only a minority (32 per cent) of the total votes. Evidently, electoral procedure was faulty and required drastic change. How could people repose confidence in a government elected by such methods ?

It will be generally accepted that the rule of law is the only firm base on which democracy can be reared. Without peace no progress can be made in any sphere of social life. When a government has been established through free elections on adult franchise, it is the duty of all citizens and political parties not only to cooperate with it but allow it to function without threat of violence as long as it enjoys the majority in the legislature. It is no doubt the right of the opposition to throw out the government, but that is permissible only when it can be shown that public opinion has changed and the rulers have lost people's confidence. This will be ascertained not by fighting in the streets but through free and an impartial election.

The outcome of rigged elections, however, cannot be true reflection of public opinion. No wonder the people are apprehensive that the Congress leaders are out to establish constitutional dictatorship in place of democracy in India.

Indira Gandhi's strong refutation of the allegations against her rule did not carry weight. An impartial observer could not help seeing in early 1974 that India was heading towards administrative disorder and economic chaos. Perhaps the communist advisers of the Prime Minister were deliberately egging her on to it for in this they saw their chance to destroy parliamentary democracy and capture power from the position of advantage in which they were now entrenched. "The

Communist Party in India", warned M.R. Masani, as far back as 1954, "is a dagger pointed at the heart of democracy in the most populous country of the world outside the Iron Curtain. Its role is to disrupt the national economy, create intellectural confusion, infiltrate into key positions and prepare for the day when, in face of national emergency or international crisis, it may be in a position to paralyse the will to resist."[14]

The failure to raise the standard of life or in other words to remove poverty pales into insignificance when we consider the decline in moral standard of the Indians during the last 27 years. Unprecedented corruption to amass wealth by any means, fair foul, disgraceful scramble for political power, loss of fellow-feelings, disregard for human personality, revival of inhuman rituals and base superstitions, ever growing number of cheats, swindlers and hypocrites posing as godmen are the main characteristics of contemporary Indian life. "There is a crisis of character today", despairingly admitted President Giri in an interview, "and there is a growing divergence between what we say and what we do. Dishonesty and corruption are on the increase."

With the decline of the British power in the forties during the Second World War, corruption started both in Indian social life and in the Government service as to become a notable feature. In 1945 Jawaharlal Nehru found it intolerable saying that black marketeers and profiteers were flourishing at the cost of the nation and that all such criminals would be hanged from the nearest lamp-post when the country became free. After the British left India corruption became a disease. President Rajendra Prasad could not help drawing attention of Nehru urging him to take drastic steps to crush the evil. Amazingly, Nehru, now the all-powerful Prime Minister of free India, felt offended at the note and told the President that it was "unfriendly."[15]

In December 1964, Finance Minister T.T. Krishnamachari assured the country that he would get very near mastering the problem of black money within a couple of years. He was far from doing so when he relinquished office. Another Congress braggart, Gulzarilal Nanda, taking over as Home Minister, pledged that he would end corruption in services in two years

or resign the ministership. Neither of the two things happened and when finally he had to quit for different reasons many years later corruption had risen to dizzy heights.

The Government appointed expert bodies to go inter alia into the problem and make recommendations to tackle it. The committees suggested a number of effective measures for ending the social and economic malaise, but nobody cared to enforce them because it would have jeopardised the ruling party's interests. Submitting its final report in December 1971, Direct Taxes Enquiry Committee beckoned that in this country "that evasion and black money have now reached a stage which can only be described as a menace to the economy and a challenge to the fulfilment of the avowed object of distributive justice and setting up of an egailitarian society."[16] But nobody heeded and the rot went on accumulating.

With the moral degradation of Congress rulers at the top touching rock bottom and Indira Gandhi committing one folly after another India slided down the precipice. Khushwant Singh, Editor of the *Illustrated Weekly of India* describing the grim situation, wrote :

> "Since we came into our own inheritance as the independent nation we have established a black record of corruption. Members of the Central Cabinet, chief ministers and state ministers—too innumerable to be enumerated—have made low use of their high office. Industrialists and merchant princes with incomes running into crores have been found guilty of cooking up accounts to cheat Income Tax of paltry sums. Judges of high courts are known to have forged birth certificates to prolong their period of service or enhance their chances to get on to the Supreme Court. Heads of religious institutions, self-appointed Bhagwans, Gurus, Acharyas, Swamins have been found indulging in money rackets."[17]

In Khushwant Singh's opinion 'in every profession—law, medicine, architecture, soldiering, engineering, teaching, arts, letter, sports—the dishonest outnumber the honest" and "politicians who boast of 'sacrifices' and read sermons on morality to the common people have a worse record than others.

The scarlet thread of bribery and corruption runs through the fabric of our society. The rich and the poor, the upper castes and the lower, the educated and the illiterate none can claim to have a spotless reputation."[18]

This would have been inconceiveable under the hated British rule. "Englishmen who were found corrupt were severely punished and sent to Conventry", Singh ruefully remarked. "Other sahibs refused to mix with them.[19]

Nor does any possibility of ending corruption appear under the Hindu nationalist regime in the foreseeable future. "We have set up special police establishmant", Singh goes on to say, "and vigilance units in department of administration. We have Public Service Commissions to see that people are selected on merit and not to favour friends or relatives. We have all the laws necessary to combat corruption : Section 161 of the Indian Penal Code reinforced by Sections of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1958, Government Service Conduct Rules- and what have you."[20] Yet Corruption has been mounting year after year.

A measure of moral degeneration is the widespread adulteration of consumer goods, especially foodstuffs and drugs, by manufacturers and traders who mint money without any scruples, at the cost of public health. There is hardly anything available in the market which is unadulterated. A survey conducted by the Consumer Council of India has shown that cold bevereges, wheat, flour, cosmetics, drugs, eatables, spices, vanaspati and liquor are among the items adulterated. The adulterers are not afraid of being prosecuted as they are reportedly supported by the enforcement department.

A form of corruption in the trading class is underweighing. According to a report of the Consumer Council the money that dishonest traders make by using outmoded scales and fraudulent forms of measurement is round about Rs. 3000 crores. The short-measuring includes businesses practically in everything from vegetables to cloth.[21]

Brahmin scriptures do not forbid resort to violence, corruption or immoral means for achieving worldly aims : even *avataras* and sages are said to have taken recourse to murder, dupery, falsehood and cheating when need for them arose to

fulfil a desire. Little wonder these hateful practices are rampant in contemporary Hindu society in free India.

Gandhi consciously and panistakingly fostered a spirit of law-breaking for nearly three decades. His satyagraha agitations invariably led to hooliganism, vulgarity, violence and bloodshed. But his magnetic influence made law-breaking respectable and laudable. Those who dared to hold contrary views and display solicitude for a lawful order in society even under foreign rule were looked down upon as renegades. Nehru called them quislings and traitors in *The Discovery of India*. A generation grew which believed that law-breaking was the hall mark of courage, patriotism and self-sacrifice. Real friends of India and far-sighted statesmen warned Congress leaders that appeasement of law-breakers and encouragement of illegal strikes and hooliganism was bound to create difficulties in the days to come but Congress patriots were in no mood to listen. During the days of negotiations with the Cabinet Mission in May 1946, Nehru asked Lord Wavell to grant certain demands of railwaymen who had threatened to go on strike. As the demands were unreasonable the Viceroy replied: "It is easy enough to buy off railwaymen temporarily but would leave a legacy of a great embarrassment for a new (national) Government." The darling hero of Hindu nationalism was the last man to listen to such sane advice.[22] Now it has begun to boomerang.

There never have been more satyagraha movements in the subcontinent during the British rule than in India since Independence. Political parties, trade unions, religious communities, linguistic groups, government employees, students, businesmen and innumerable other bodies of people and even individuals all over the country have from time to time deliberately overstepped the boundaries of law in order to bring pressure on the Government to get their grievances, real or fancied, redressed. Cat-call strikes have become the order of the day. On November, 11, 1973, addressing the Congress Parliamentary Party, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said that while "the current economic situation was no less serious than a war-time emergency" yet "the workers resorted to strikes on flimsy ground." Three days later, on November 14 in a message

launching the Fifth Plan Week she appealed to the "good sense and patriotism of workers, farmers, Government employees, businessmen and others to consider the issues affecting them in the wider national perspective." Spotlighting the growing economic crisis in the country she said despondingly on 17 November that she did not know when it would end.

The Railwaymen's unions served notices to the authorities in April 1974 that if their various demands were not met the entire railway network would stop functioning on 8th May. Negotiations between union leaders and Railway Ministry having broken down the threat materialised.

The Government might have yielded to the demands after the strike was launched, but this time the harassed public opposed the strike which encouraged the authorities to put their foot down; the strike fizzled out within a fortnight. Yet much mischief had already been done. According to PTI preliminary estimates the Railway lost Rs. 50 crores in traffic earnings and the economy more than 500 crores in the 20 days of the strike. Worse still, the prices of several consumer commodities rose by 20 per cent during the period.

But the strikes and the satyagrahas continue unabated with the inevitable consequences of decreasing production and increasing high prices, shortages and lawlessness. Not infrequently agitation is accompanied by violence. Those in charge of law and order have to use force, make baton charges, explode tear-gas shells or open fire to bring the unruly crowds under control. It has been computed by publicists who are not prone to exaggerate, that the British Government did not resort to firing so often as the Congress Government did during the post-Independence period and that more people have been killed within the quarter centuary by police guns than were destroyed by the bayonets in suppressing the civil commotions during the entire period of British rule. Why is this so ? "When fifteen million peasants quietly petition", answers Ronald Segal "the Congress leadership cannot hear, and when fifteen hundred rioters loot shops and fire trams it stirs to respond. Thus, when it should attend, it ignores, when it should resist, it succumbs."[23]

Hardly a week passes by when a violent riot involving life and destruction of property and killing by police firing is not reported on the front pages of daily papers. Burning of buses and public property such as government building, railway stations or post offices are no rarities. We have become innured to disorder and do not feel appalled at it as we used to do before. "Agitation has undoubtedly become a way of life in this country", bewailed the *Indian Express* in November 1972. "But are we equally aware of the fact that agitation is increasingly accompanied by violence, and that violence is gradually replacing all other means of expressing dissent and resentment. This is not democracy, not even just mobocracy. It is the beginning of anarchy."[24] Frank Moraes put the situation this way : "There is a government in India but there seems to be no administration. The rule of law is accompanied by the reign of disorder."[25]

A severe indictment of the administrative apparatus in the country was made by the All-India Confederation of Central Government Officers Association which it accused of "prevarication and suppression of truth in the matter of national importance at a time of crisis." In a statment the Federation said that "there has been significant deterioration in the law and order situation a general sense of insecurity is growing, attacks on women are perpetrated with impunity, the public distribution system is in great danger of collapsing, prices rise unchecked, land records are in chaotic state and the drudgery and the poverty of people is deepening."[26]

The pomp and show in which the ruling caste lives and the five-year plans parading astronomical figures for expenditure on nation-building departments and social services, hide the corrosive processess but cannot mislead the intelligent observer. "The disease from which the Kuomintang collapsed has already infected Congress", said Segal. "It is a far-cry from the one time chaos of Nanking to the present day splendours of New Delhi. But the alarm has begun to sound."[27]

The disenchantment caused by the developments in all walks of life since Independence has compelled even staunchest Gandhists to despondency. "Like millions of those who had fought and suffered for the country's freedom", wrote Jayaprakash

Narayan on May 16, 1973, expressing common frustration, "I too had a golden vision of Independent India. Today when I compare the reality with the vision I am filled with sadness. And when I ponder over the future that the recent events portend my heart sinks. I cannot believe that it can be otherwise with my fellow freedom fighters."[28] Poor Naryan could not, however, realize that Congress government was not solely or even mainly to blame for the sorry state and the root-cause lay in the teachings of Gita and the Gandhian outlook on life.

The unhealthy trends could have been changed by dissemination of true knowledge and spread of rational culture. No doubt the amounts spent on education are enormous and schools and colleges have been started in the remotest corners of the country to bring light to the people. But twenty-seven years after Independence seventy per cent of the population is still illiterate. Evidently it is the upper class fringe that has profited by the expansion of education who have manipulated to keep the disinherited of the Brahmin society away from the centres of light. For the promotion of democratic outlook the logical next step from mass electorate should have been to mass education as was clearly indicated in the Directive Principles of the Constitution. But women, peasants, labouring classes, shudras and untouchables though enfranchised have been hindered from getting education and easily fooled under the Congress Raj.

And this is not all. If we just go through the text books taught in the schools especially in the lower classes we can well realise why the outlook of Indians does not change. The text books are full of irrational ideas, *pauranic* beliefs and Brahmin lies which are supposed to be part of Indian culture and civilisation.

When in 1966 attention of the Union Government was drawn to this vital matter, a Committee with K. G. Saiyidain, J. P. Naik and Gopinath Aman, among others, its members, was formed to report on the education imparted in the schools. After going through the available data the Committee found that (a) the books were over weighed with Hindu mythology; (b) most of the prose as well as poetry selections in text books

are prayers to Hindu deities; (c) Hindu mythological beliefs are presented in a manner as if they are universally held by all Indians; (d) historical presonalities belonging to other religious groups are neglected, and (e) historical events are presented in such a manner as to arouse and perpetuate prejudices against certain religious group.[29] The Committee's findings and recommendations were considered but ultimately treated with scant regard and the contents of text books continue to be as they were before.

The spirit of Brahmin nationalism is sedulously fostered and cult of hero-worship implanted in the scholars' mind. Premium is placed on national conceit, vanity and intolerance.

There is no serious endeavour to inculcate rational beliefs, democratic ideas or humanist ideals. When the rulers themselves are swayed by assured notions and superstitions which they believe to be a part of Indian culture and perennial philosophy how can it be otherwise? For example, it is no secret that the Congress leaders respose faith in astrology and many ministers at the Centre and in the States act only on the advice of paid soothsayers maintained by them. Public functions have to be held not when it is convenient to all concerned but on auspicious days and at auspicious hours fixed by the astrologers; even travels are undertaken by dignitaries according to reported propitious position of the stars.

Nehru bowed to astrologers on August 15, 1947. No one could blame smaller Congressmen when they emulated him. Faithfully copying their leaders the common people who are notorious for lack of self-confidence, look to astrologers for succour in distress. "India is ruled by a band of astrologers", revealed a special correspondent of the *Hindustan Times*, "and if there is one single tribe which has thrived in post-Independence Delhi it is that of the fortune tellers."[30]

It has become a practice with Congress leaders to initiate big public projects and plans with religious ceremonies where Brahmin scriptures are recited and Vedic rituals held.

In a function on February 17, 1971, President Giri inaugurated a campaign to collect millions of copies of *Ramayana*, the ancient Brahmin epic, for distribution abroad which was entrusted to Indian embassies in different countries.

In order to demonstrate that Hindu rule was restored in India after a thousand years of malechha occupation, the Congress leaders decided to renovate temples demolished by Muslim conquerors and also to build new ones. On November 13, 1947 Sardar Patel took a vow not be rest until the Somnath temple in Gujarat destroyed in 1024 by Mahmud Ghazni, was reconstructed. The machinery of the secular State was utilised for the purpose. On May 11, 1951, amidst chanting of Vedic hymns Rajendra Prasad, first President of India, installed *jyotilinga* (Hindu Idol) in the Somnath temple, thus laying a tradition for his successors to follow. Consequently there has been a spurt of religious activities and enormous increase in the wealth of the Hindu temples. The annual income of Tirupati Devasthanam is reported to be Rs. 9,18,44,300.

It is not entirely a coincidence that drowned in a sea of vexing problems, Mrs. Gandhi should betray spiritual and intellectual weakness from which she was unknown to have suffered previously. Following in the footsteps of her father, she sought "spiritual" crutches from Anandamayee Maa who reportedly endowed the Prime Minister with a string of sanctified beads by wearing which, the saint assured her, even worst toubles could be warded off. Whenever small successes have attended on Mrs. Gandhi's policies and endeavours she attributes these to her faith in the gods and godmen. Nevertheless her failures go on mounting and at times appear overwhelming. She has started paying visits to shrines and temples to worship deities and cater to the wants of Brahmin priests. Visiting Tirupati, she performed senseless rituals while making her obeisance. She is reported to take astrologers into her confidence for predicting future events and advising her on auspicious date and time to make important moves. She confessed that Vedanta attracted her as the true philosophy of life. Of course, she has always been and continues to be a devotee of Gandhi and upholds the obscurantism he stood for.

With the rejuvenation of Brahminism in social and political life of India the evils which had been eradicated by the British rulers are again raising their ugly heads. Maladministration, disorder, insecurity, thuggee, highway robbery, dacoity, assaults on women and callousness in general are some of them.

Encouraged by religious fanatics and approved by Hindu opinion the savage rite of *sati* has been revived in certain parts of Free India. From time to time the more dreadful cases are reported in the press without causing even a ripple of horror, pity or remorse in the Hindu community. On February 25, 1974, a grief-stricken Rajput woman was thrown on the burning pyre of her dead husband at Surapura village 90 km from Sikar in Rajasthan. Much preparation must have been made, prior to the performance of the horrible rite, as no fewer than ten thousand people from the nearby town of Nimkantha and neighbouring villages were present to witness the immolation. Not even a single spectator protested against the inhuman act or tried to save the unfortunate victim of the religious frenzy. The police too took no notice while the preparations were in progress and arrived at the spot one hour after the unfortunate young damsel had been reduced to ashes. Reporting the events, the *Times of India* revealed : "this is the fourth case of sati in the Nimkantha area in the past ten months."[31]

More numerous are the reported cases of human sacrifice, some of them shuddering. The gruesome murders are committed to appease Hindu deities like Kali, Bhairavi and Durga. "Paras Ram of Dina Nagar village in Gurdaspur district offered his own child as a sacrifice to propitiate some blood-thirsty god to remove the curse of still-births in his family. While his two sisters held the legs of the boy, aged four and half years, Paras Ram beheaded it. After hacking the body to pieces it was cooked and eaten by the offenders in the belief that the child would be reborn in the family."[32]

Thus emerges Independent Bharat having her "tryst with destiny" under Hindu Nationalism, not unlike India of the Gupta era, passing through the second "golden age" (Vivekananda), and in the words of Nehru (spoken about the first "golden age"), "vigorous, proud and full of vitality yet carrying the seeds of the decline and decay with it from the very outset."

42

What is Indian Culture ?

THE people of India, like the people of other countries, have learned by speculation, observation and experience to evolve theories about the Universe in which man lives, and build philosophical systems and social institutions so that with their help human life could be enriched and society civilized. This study should have already shown that in India these attempts have been made in two different directions. There have been two modes of thought. While one class of thinkers has accepted reason in Nature as its sole guide in discovering ideals and translating them in actual life, another class has relied on supra natural intuition to have ideas about the Universe and lay tenets and dogmas to solve problems confronted by man. The endeavours of the former resulted in the development of a philosophy; man tries to explain Nature in the light of laws inherent in it and understand his own being in relation to its surroundings. The knowledge gained by observation and past experience enables him to become self-reliant and construct his own future.

Transcendental intuition is antithesis of reason; sooner or later it induces one to mystify thought and take recourse to religion. But to explain nature is no part of religion. Its function is to raise barriers between mysteries of nature and human understanding. Religion teaches man to depend on the mercy of the Supreme Being for the removal of all difficul-

ties and obstructions in the way of his life; it kills his initiative and renders him helpless.

If we ignore the Mohen-jo-Daro and the Harappa Civilisations about which our knowledge is incomplete, we can say that the Indian civilisation dawns with the coming of the Aryans.

In the early Vedic Age we do not find any traces of religion. Excavations made by archaeologists so far have yielded evidence neither in the cities of Indus Valley civilisation nor elsewhere about places of worship in the subcontinent before the nineth century B.C. There were no temples and there are no extant ruins of any such religious structures. The people in the early ages were more interested in gathering food, tending cattle and living a happy pastoral life than in thinking about the unknown and unknowable forces in the universe; they were led by the reality of existence to which they responded by simple reason. But later some ideas about the mysteries of nature took hold of them. They began to worship stones, trees, animals, and crudely constructed idols. Fetichism is the first form of religion which primitive people have developed all over the world. With the help of imagination, natural phenomena were personified and a variety of gods created to explain the universe and its diverse manifestations. Thus started the period of Vedic religion when the Brahmin priests, as middlemen between the common people and the gods, assumed the leadership and established sacerdotal supremacy. An elaborate system of sacrifices, rituals, customs, and ceremonies was set up to stabilize the religious society.

The intellectual progress of the Indians did not stop with this. They went ahead and rose above the savagery of fetichism and polytheistic beliefs. The worship of stones, trees and animals or even of the denizens of heaven did not satisfy their spiritual yearning. Their belief in the patron gods and their wordly agents, the Brahmins, was shaken. They went back to reason for guidance and deposing the deities and abolishing priestcraft created the glorious system of rationalist-materialist thought. After a number of heterodox thinkers had blasted the foundations of Vedic religion, Gautama Buddha appeared and revolutionalised the thinking of the people which

led to radical changes in the social and political life of the country. For nearly a thousand years (roughly 500 B.C. to 500 A.C.) India was governed by the rationalist doctrines more or less in all fields of social life. New values, traditions and institutions, divergent from those set up by the Brahmins, were established.

Then Buddhism declined and the revolution was defeated. Renewing itself in the light of a thousand years experience, Brahminism rose to ascendancy afresh. It revived the hoary institutions and traditions introducing necessary alterations in them to suit the society which had undergone a drastic change during the period of the Revolution. The holy poem, the Bhagavad-Gita, is the product of the new Brahmin thinking. For thirteen centuries (500-1800 A.D.) thereafter neo-Brahminism dominated over the Indian society.

In the eighteenth century the country came under the rule of the British who introduced modern democratic culture which reared on rational thought and science, revived the memories of the Buddhist Revolution and gave birth to a renaissance movement. The nineteenth century saw the decline of religion, the flow of free ideas and the establishment of liberal institutions and traditions. Early in the present century India was rocked by Hindu Reaction and Revivalism which thwarted the Renaissance. With the achievement of Independance we have entered another age of darkness.

In view of the chequered cultural history, to declare that India's past has been solely religious or so-called spiritualistic or that rationalism or materialism is exotic to us is to be partial, if not wholly untrue to the past. If anything, we have inherited a mixed culture which is partly religious and partly rationalist. "Those who are under the notion", says Dakshiranjan Bhattacharya, "that India is a land of spiritualism know her but partially. The materialist school of thought in India was as vigorous and comprehensive as materialist philosophy in the modern world."[1]

Persisent and vigorous attempts have been made by the Brahmin chroniclers after the rise of neo-Brahminism in the 4th century A.D. to erase the memory and ignore, or at least undermine, the achievements of the Buddhist Revolution and

to show that it was Brahminism which prevailed in India throughout history. There was no effective movement, we are told, which opposed Brahminism or succeeded in influencing the people. Charvakism, Buddhism or Jainism were, in such a study, mere abberations which rose like bubbles and burst like bubbles. This view does not correspond to facts. "The rationalist, materialist and naturalistic teachings of Kanada, Gautama, Mahavira, Charvak, and others," says M. N. Roy, "were ultimately buried under the ruins of the (defeated) Buddhist revolution. Brahminical reaction, reasserting itself in the scholasticism of Shankaracharya, choked all spiritual progress so successfully that a renaissance of the liberating thought of antiquity was delayed until it was too late. General prostration and stagnation precluded the rise of new social forces corresponding to those which rescued Europe from the darkness of the pious and spiritual Middle Ages. India remained 'spiritual' because, owing to historical reasons, she was deprived of the blessings of modern science. Here spiritualism is the badge of social backwardness, which brought her people slavery, degradation and degeneration."[2]

Rational thinking and materialist philosophy have contributed to the formation of Indian culture and character as much as, if not more, than the Brahmin religion. Rhys Davids in refuting the claims of Brahmins exposes their dishonesty in writing history. He says :

> "Their own later books persistently exaggerate, mis-state, above all (that most successful method of suggestio falsi), omit the other side. They have thus given a completely distorted view of Indian society, and of the place in it of the priests. They were not the only learned, or the only intellectual men, any more than they were the only wealthy ones. The religion and the culture recorded in their books were not, at any period, the sole religion, or the only custom, of the many peoples in India. The intellectual movement before the rise of Buddhism was in large measure a lay movement, not a priestly one. During the subsequent centuries, down to the Christian era and beyond it, the priests were left high and dry by the vigorous currents of the national aims and hopes. Even later than that, how different is the colouring of the

picture drawn by the Chinese pilgrims from that of the priestly artists? And we shall continue to have but a blurred and confused idea of Indian history unless and until the priestly views are checked and supplemented throughout by a just and proportionate use of the other views now open to research."[3]

The Brahmin writers sedulously create the impression that from early times to the present day Indian thinking has been solely religious and all sections of the people had adopted it uninterruptedly. In the opinion of Rhys Davids the Buddhists "probably at least during the fourth and third centuries B. C. formed the majority of the people. And the movement of thought of which all these (heretic) schools arose, so far from being negligible quantity, as the priestly books suggest, was one of the most dominant factors the historian of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries B. C. has to consider."[4]

On the one hand, Brahmins tried to efface the memory of the heterodox philosophies and supremacy of reason in the Indian society during the period of revolution, on the other, they borrowed thoughts and ideas from these very schools to rejuvenate their own religious system. Even the Gita itself is largely a post-Buddhistic composition. Describing the Brahmin culture, R. C. Majumdar observes : "One great peculiarity of Indian culture is that it adds to, but seldom altogether supersedes, the old institutions and faithfully preserves, as far as possible, all relics of the past, even though they are hidden or changed beyond recognition, by later growths."[5] Thus we find the Hindus still worshipping trees, animals and stones, reposing faith in amulets, talismans, omens and mantras for good health and in the auspicious position of planets for success of any activity in life. A Hindu mind is stocked with primitive ideas, savage notions as well as the modern theories of philosophy and discoveries of science. It is a jumble which disallows clear thinking. For, if the scientific knowledge pulls the Hindu in one directions, the primitive notions which are equally powerful in his mind restrain him and pull him in another. It seems that the mental make-up of some one like an educated Hindu must have been in view of George Bernard Shaw when he wrote : "We persist in pouring the clear water

into the dirty, and our minds are always muddled in consequence. The educated human of today has a mind which can be compared to a store in which the very latest and most precious acquisitions are flung on top of a noisome heap of rag-and-bottle refuse and worthless antiquities from the museum lumber room."[6]

The early cultural history of India and Greece has been similar. Both countries passed through the periods of fetichism and worship of innumerable gods personifying forces of nature. The demolition of the pantheon and evolution of monotheism also followed in like manner among both the peoples. It is interesting that these developments took place almost in the same period of history in both the countries. But the subsequent developments have been different. The positive outcome of Greek intellectual movement survived after being suppressed for nearly seven centuries by papal orthodoxy plunging Europe into the dark ages. Rational thought remerged in the European Renaissance. "The metaphysical deviation of the Greek philosophy", says M. N. Roy, "led up to the establishment of the Catholic Church which held European humanity in ignorance and superstition and therefore obstructed all spiritual progress for so many hundred years. But, at the same time, its materialist essence promoted the scientific culture of Alexandria. As outcome of the Democritan and Epicurean conception of the uniformity and necessity in the course of nature, Alexandrian learning was the brilliant prelude to the age of modern science, though separated from the latter by more than one thousand and five hundred years. As a matter of fact, Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler and Newton took up the thread of science left of by Archimedes, Aristarchus Hypparchus, Euclid and others. Even in organic science, Galen was not far behind the point from which Lamarck and Darwin began. Thus, fifteen years of metaphysics and theology could not deprive humanity of its materialist heritage. As soon as social conditions enabled European humanity to return to the conquest of nature, a process disturbed by the chaos following the decline and downfall of the Roman Empire, the fire of knowledge kindled in antiquity began to shine through the darkness of faith."[7] Nothing like this happened in India.

Here the positive achievements of the ancient thinkers like Charvak, Kapila and Kanada was smothered by the Brahmin Reaction and taken as dead for ever.

Owing to historical reasons, Indian thought did not go beyond the panthetic stage where it had been taken by Shankaracharya. Pantheism is the inverted form of materialism and blows God into nothingness. Religion is thus abolished and its place taken by rationalism which leads to the discoveries of science. But the Hindu pantheism failed to develop further and Indian thought was arrested during the long period of social stagnation that followed the decline and defeat of the Buddhist Revolution. It has been India's misfortune to stay longer in darkness. India did not give birth to any Copernicus, Galelio, Bruno, Kepler or Newton. Decayed spiritualism was accepted as the national philosophy and the popular creed. Shorn of the progressive ideas and institutions, India's obscurantism is presented today by Hindu nationalists as the only philosophy which the country has evolved from early times, Enthusiasts go a step further and assert that this philosophy alone can save not only India but also the modern world from its impending doom.

Why did such a misfortune befall India ? Why did not the rationalist movement finally triumph in this country as it did in Europe ? Let a sympathetic admirer of Brahmin philosophy answer : "One cannot but feel", writes Heinrich Zimmer, "that such a sublime flight as India's into the transcendental realm would never have been attempted had the conditions of life been the least bit less hopeless. Release (*moksha*) can become the main preoccupation of thought only when what binds human being to their secular normal existences affords absolutely no hope (and) represents only duties, burdens, and obligations proposing no promising tasks or aims that stimulate and justify mature ambitions on the plane of earth. India's propensity for transcendental and the misery of India's history are, most certainly, intimately related to each other; they must not be regarded separately. The ruthless philosophy of politics and the superhuman achievements in metaphysics represent the two sides of a single experience of life."[8] That is to say, the suppressed, brutalized and frustrated people had

no choice but to have faith in the transcendental philosophy called the Vedanta or "spiritualism" by Hindu writers.

Nowhere in the civilized societies have anachronistic ideas and outmoded beliefs survived except in the Hindu society. The intelligent Brahmins realising this backwardness invented the theory that India's culture was unique being "spiritualistic" and therefore superior to all other cultures of the world. This was a psychological method of concealing at least in one's own eyes, the fact of perpetual frustration and consequent inferiority complex. The next step was to claim that in this position of "superiority" India has a message to deliver to the West to save it from decline caused by spread of science and adoption of materialist doctrines.

India's cultural history may be roughly divided into three periods : 1. Pre-Buddhist, 2. Buddhist, and 3. Post-Buddhist. The first was the formative period when diverse ideas and theories about life were given free expression, were allowed to contend and clash with each other. Though the Brahmins got the upper hand and succeeded temporarily in establishing their supremacy the process of thought in opposition to them did not slow down. In fact, opponents of the Vedic religion (*Veda nindakas*) overthrew Brahmin authority and ushered in the second period of Indian culture. Then for a thousand years this-worldly attitude prevailed and the country registered progress in all walks of social life. With the defeat of Buddhism opened the last period when for fourteen hundred years transcendentalism held sway and there was intellectual degeneration and spiritual demoralization in Indian society.

India has been the land of frustrated revolutions. If the first intellectual and social revolution initiated by Buddhism was defeated by Brahmin reactionaries in the fourth and fifth centuries, the second secular democratic revolution introduced by the British was vanquished by Hindu revivalists in the twentieth century. In its frustration Indian society stands unparalleled among the civilised nations of the world. Amusingly it is in his frustration that the Hindu leaders find a message they have to deliver to the world particularly in the West. Ideas, ideals, institutions and traditions which are fondly cherished by the Hindus as the token of the supposed

superiority of India's culture belong to the dark age of Europe when Christian prejudice paraded in the garb of piety, ignorance claimed the sublimity of virtue and idle guesses put on the dignity of philosophy.

Broadly speaking, all that is liberal, progressive and humanistic in Hindu character—and it is not inconsiderable—has come down mostly from the rationalist—materialist past of Indian history or partly imbibed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries under impact of Western culture; the cant, conceit, chicanery, callousness, intolerance and all that is unedifying in it are the legacies of Brahminism. Unhappily, after Independence the latter ingredients are increasingly dominating over the former in contemporary Indian society.

Any unbiased and serious study of the history of philosophy will show that their "sublime" thoughts and "lofty" ideals on which Hindu intellectuals was eloquent have nothing new in them. They have all been held and extolled in vanished culture produced under similar social and economic conditions in which we live today. In the fullness of time when the conditions changed for the better, owners of that culture passed through mental and intellectual revolution discarding the antiquated cults because facts of life had discredited them and compelled creation of new values. "Although India is going through an Industrial Revolution of sorts", wrote Koestler", it has never gone through a Scientific Revolution of the kind which changed the structure of European thought in the seventeenth century, supplanting magical causation by physical causation. Before that turning point, Europe was almost as deeply immersed in astrology and other forms of magic thought as India still is. But in Europe, that transformation of thought preceded the transformation of society, in India it is the other way round. Underneath the power dams and steel works of the Second Five Year Plan lies the ancient soil; one only has to scratch it and the black magic comes oozing out with its slightly rancid smell."[9]

It is a wholly mistaken belief that the so-called spiritualism is an Indian discovery and materialism an occidental philosophy. With variations here and there man has passed through almost the same intellectual processess and evolved the same

philosophies under different social conditions wherever civilisation flourished in the past, be it in India, Greece, China or in any other country. When worldly life is full of miseries and offers nothing but debasing poverty and unendurable hardship, and the society faces a dismal perspective of deeper degeneration, the elusive hope of eternal happiness through mysterious life can become the motive for renunciation and incredible acts of asceticism and devotion to the unseen and unknown Supreme Being. It is this state of frustration which the Hindu leaders call spiritualist culture and offer it as panacea for the supposed ills of the materialist and prosperous West. "In Europe, scholasticism went out of fashion in the sixteenth century", points out Koestler; "in India, the angels are still dancing on the point of the needle."[10]

A few reactionary intellectuals in Europe and America who, terrified by the rapid advance of science and the radical changes it is swiftly bringing about in the life of humanity, have failed to adjust their thinking to the new environment and nostalgically look back to the primitive religious life as ideal, admire our frustration and applaud our "spiritual" philosophy. This has encouraged the Hindu revivalists in their false beliefs and fortified them in their mistakes. The beliefs in India's "spiritual" message has become a solace to pseudo-intellectuals suffering from inferiority complex. It has become a heady wine which brings pleasant inebriation. It has goaded famous Hindu leaders to indulge in wishful thinking. Eighty years ago Vivekanand back from USA addressing a Madras audience, thundered : "Spirituality must conquer the world. Slowly they (Westerners) are finding out that what they want is spirituality to preserve them as nations." Imbued with overenthusiasm he prophesied : "The whole of the Western world is perched on a volcano which may burst and go to pieces tomorrow."[11] Not only has the Western world in the past eighty years not perished but has achieved prosperity unprecedented and unknown in the annals of mankind. Aurobindo also cherished a wild dream by thinking that "India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever-increasing manner."[12] Gandhi too made very harsh remarks about Western civilisation in his writings. "This civilisation is such that one

has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed."[13] Neverthelesss, Western civilisation is not only alive and kicking to this day but continues to thrive.

The typical reaction to Indian "spirituality of a modern Westerner is best described by Koestler in concluding his impressions of his Indian tour. "I travelled in India in a mood of a pilgrim", he says. "Like countless others, I wondered whether the East had any answer to our perplexities and deadlocked problem." And what did he find : "I started my journey in sackcloth and ashes and came back rather proud of being a European...a detached comparison with other continents of the way Europe stood up to its past trials, and of its contribution to man's history, leaves one with new confidence and affections for that small figure riding on the back of the Asian bull."[14] At another place he says : To look to Asia for mystic enlightenment and spiritual guidance has become as much of an anachronism as to think of America as the Wild West."[15] Unless some unforeseen catastrophe overtakes the progressive societies of the West, there is little chance of humanity reverting to medieval obscurantism and the mental stage in which it was prior to its scientific and technological advance.

Indian "spiritual" culture is a queer amalgam, most of it belonging to Brahminic past, not only grotesque but also anti-progress, anti-democratic and anti-social. There are no doubt elements in it, relics of the glorious Buddhist era, which are everlasting, life-giving, conducive to healthy development of society and compatible with the discoveries of science and modern technology. In the mediaeval time Papist Christians were also proud of the intellectual degeneration and moral degradation into which the people had sunk for many centuries due to the predominance of the "spiritual" culture. But then there was a revolt against it. The Italian Renaissance inspired by Greek rationalist thoughts as preserved by the Arabs in their translations, reopened the gateway of knowledge, and with the rise of physical science, a philosophical revolution took place in Europe. The happy dawn of knowledge was occasioned by forces yearning to build a new equitous social order. The vain chase after will-o'-the-wisp of spirituality which disregards

all reality was abandoned and a new faith inculcated in the sublimity of worldly life. Man regained faith in himself and by the strength of advancing knowledge he pushed aside the influence of superstition, prejudice and credulity. That is what remains to be done in India.

Epicurus, the great rationalist thinker of ancient Greece who had been denounced for saying "*philosophy is the activity that makes man happy through knowledge*", and eclipsed during the dark ages of "spiritual" ascendancy in Europe, was rediscovered in the seventeeth century. Such distorted maxims as "Eat, drink and be merry" which had been perseveringly attributed to him by the unscrupulous and opportunist Roman reactionaries were exposed and the venerable sage reinstalled at his rightful place. There is a striking similarity in the thoughts of Epicurus and Charvak as also in the fate of the two bold thinkers. But unlike the former, the latter still lives in oblivion, signifying that dark age which continues to prevail in this country.

In the last century India came very close to a philosophical revolution but unfortunately with the defeat of liberalism at the hands of Hindu revivalists no profound change actually took place. India has, therefore, yet to undergo a renaissance by rediscovering the works of indigenous rationalists and materialists. With inspiration from the part of our cultural heritage and not from the Brahmin scriptures like Gita, we have to bring about a revolution in the outlook of the people.

Surveying the vast store-house of the ancient Indian culture we have to judge which part to discard and which to retain if we have to be true to our professions of establishing secular democracy and social justice in this land. In the words of G. B. Shaw we must empty our mind of all filthy water which we have allowed to accumulate in it since the days of the Vedas and the Upanishads and allow only such water to remain there which is fresh and life-giving but neither stagnant nor stale.

43

The Perspective

IF there is any uniqueness about the Indian culture it is this : While in all progressive societies the priestly order was abolished along with the pantheon created by it after it had played its historical role in envolving a civilisation, in India the Brahmins have manoeuvred to stay on with their millions of gods, caste system, irrational theories of karma and rebirth as well as many illiberal institutions and primitive customs, rituals and ceremonies till the present day. The Brahmins and their dupes have been successful throughout history either to nip an incipient social revolution in its infancy or to destroy it if, in spite of them, it matured. Thus the Indian society has remained in the grip of the priesthood. When the Vedic religion and its traditions had fallen on bad days during the period of the Buddhist Revolution, Brahmins knew how to bide their time to stage a comeback, resume authority in the society and reinvigorate their weakened beliefs, forgotten customs and forsaken rituals. E.B. Havell, a great admirer of Indo-Aryan culture, reveals :

> "Even many of the Buddha disciples were Brahmins who changed their names upon initiation as members of the Sangha in the same way as Christians dropped their pagan names upon baptism. Already in Asoka's time the Brahmins had probably captured the whole machinery of the Sangha as effectively as in modern times they have

> controlled the inner working of British departmental machinery. A similar situation obtained in the world of religious thought represented by Brahminism. Brahminical or Vedic sacrificial ritual was transformed or swept away, but the ideas behind it remained as nucleus of a new spiritual growth."[1]

In the post-Independence period it has not been anything different. Notwithstanding the Preamble of the Indian Constitution which loudly proclaims equality of all Indians, the Brahmins are in fact more equal than other classes of the people. Prem Bhasin, Secretary of the Indian Socialist Party, surveying Indian political situation in 1972, observed :

> "It is believed that Brahmins all over India are beginning to rally round her (Indira Gandhi) because she alone seems to be capable of fighting the anti-Brahminism of the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the Maratha resurgence under Chavan-Naik leadership in Maharashtra."[2]

It may be fortuitous but is a fact that the Indian delegation to the summit conference between India and Pakistan held in Simla in July, 1972, was totally composed of Kashmiri Brahmins.

We have seen that the astute Brahmins without in any way deviating from basic tenets and cardinal principles of their religion, have adapted themselves to the changed circumstances from age to age in order to maintain their supremacy. They have lain low at the rise of revolutionary forces only to avenge themselves when able to wield power again. The process of adaptation started with the decline of Buddhism but its methodology was perfected in the teachings of the Gita which has served as trusted guide of the Brahmins for the last fifteen hundred years. The changes effected in Brahminism have already been noted in previous chapters. The single and constant aim of the changes has been to draw wind out of the sails of revolutionary movements and delude the victims—toiling masses, lower castes, untouchables and women—by making them believe that Brahminism is a philosophy of freedom and universal brotherhood. To this end revolutionary slogans are raised when there is no intention to translate them into practice. The progressive ideas and ideals are no doubt

extolled in the Gita-style only to be distorted and made subservient to the fundamental theories of Brahminism.

Two remarkable changes have taken place in Brahmin outlook in the twentieth century to make it palatable to Indian masses and inoffensive to world liberal opinion. The hoary creed reared on the principle of *chaturvarnya* (four-caste system) now stands on four pillars namely, democracy, nationalism, secularism and socialism with the all important proviso that they will be reoriented to suit the Indian genius. Which, in other words, means that the progressive slogans hold valid only to the extent that Brahmin doctrines remain unimpaired. Secondly, it is also no longer necessary that only Brahmins should be the guardians and spokesmen of the Indian society. Others also can have that privilege if, in the words of Medatithi and Gandhi, they unreservedly accept the basic principles of Brahmin culture. Even the shudras and untouchables and malechhas (non-Hindus) can be admitted into the preserve after embracing Hindu nationalism in the name of "democracy, nationalism, secularism and socialism." Thus we find members of all castes and communities rubbing shoulders with each other in the Central and the State Congress cabinets. The moment an Indian is completely Brahminised in expression and behaviour he can enjoy honours, amenities and privileges that power can confer. But if he shows any signs of independence in thought or action, however reasonable, he falls from grace and is declared anti-national, anti-democratic and anti-social.

The leaders of Hindu Nationalism have constructed a spiritual steel-frame in which to contain Indian society. Their unparalleled success in having suppressed rational thought and social revolution emboldens them to claim that Brahminism is India, and if one is destroyed the other will disappear along with it. Nehru has quoted Sir George Birdwood who said : "So long as Hindus hold to caste system India will be India; but from the day they break from it there will be no more India."[3]

Seemingly liberal par excellence, Hindu nationalists cannot tolerate any tampering with the steel-frame which is calculated to jeopardize their position of advantage. "Hinduism has an uncanny sense of what threatens it", wrote Nirad Chaudhury,

"No plausible assurances, no euphemism, no disguise can put its ever-alert instinct of self-preservation off its guard. No indirect approach can take it by surprise. Therefore, during British rule, Hinduism has fought tooth and nail even those measures of reform which a non-Hindu would consider as purely humanitarian, such as the abolition of infanticide, the burning of widows, the raising of the age of consent, the marriage of the widows, and intercaste marriages."[4]

It is easy to criticise or denounce their doctrines but it is difficult to deny the uncommon ability and cleverness of the Brahmins to hold their own even in the most adverse circumstances. They have proved beyond doubt that their opponents can not outwit them nor oust them from the field for ever. The greatest success of Hinduism under Gandhi's leadership in the present century, lies in its having been able to hoodwink both the illiterate masses and the elite into believing that in its outmoded ideals they can find freedom and fulfilment of their age-old aspirations. The dismaying developments in all fields—social, economic and political—in the post-Independence period have by no means materially altered this circumstance.

Brahminism is in the marrow of a Hindu; the demoralizing superstitions, caste prejudices and inhuman traditions and practices inculcated for thousands of years are ingrained in his blood. "Hinduism influences not merely how an Indian acts", says Segal, "but how he thinks, not merely how he believes but how he feels... Life of Hindu is largely governed by the avoidance of ritual pollution by the countless yet clear caste formulations with their inflexible rules of how and where and when and with whom to eat and drink and wash and work."[5]

In contemporary India it is not the Hindu alone who is affected by the Brahmin doctrines. Everyone, to whatever faith he may belong, comes under their pernicious influence. It is a malady spread all over the country in an epidemic form. "No one—Muslim or Parsee, Christian or Sikh—who lives in Hindu India is unaffected by Hindu doctrine and traditional conduct, whether through the adoption of caste, or obsession with ritual cleanliness, or fundamentally the resignation, submission to the duty of one's condition."[6]

Whether it is caste animosity, linguistic enmity, communal discord or provincial antagonism, the souree is the same namely, the divisive philosophy on which the structure of Hindu Nationalism is raised. To make India a free democratic nation the roots of the evil have to be eradicated. There can be no brotherhood between a Hindu and a Muslim, between a touchable and an untouchable, between a northerner and a southerner, so long as Brahminism dominates the minds of them all. Being in an over whelming majority the Hindus have a particular responsibility to be the first in the task of launching a crusade against religious mode of thinking. If they start, rest of the Indian humanity is bound to follow.

But the Congress rulers, despite their liberal and democratic professions, have a vested interest in fostering religious attitude. For that reason the All-India Radio, the TV, the educational institutions, and even the so-called democratic practices are all utilised to cultivate the Hindu mode of life. It is no easy task to liberate India from spiritual slavery against heavy odds.

India's basic problem lies in the colossal ignorance of the people who have infinite capacity to believe, amazing aptitude for self-deception and inexhaustible patience to suffer. All the three pernicious vices in Indian character are lauded as great virtues; these are considered to be a proof of soul-force in a people who completely depend on Divine Will. Leaders, both spiritual and temporal, have derived fullest advantage to themselves from the weaknesses and prevented the followers from knowing the truth or seeking real freedom.

With the hope of enjoying better life and sunny days after Independence shattered, people generally have lost faith in the Congress Government. It is fondly believed that a change in the present political set up can stem the rot from spreading and effect improvement in the lot of the people. The illusory expectation is an outcome of thoughtlessness and desperation. Our troubles emanate primarily from irrational outlook shared by the leaders with common people, and only secondarily from inefficiency, corruption and moral laxness in the administration. In fact, the blemishes in national character are born of this outlook. Removal of the present ruling party from power

and installation of opposition with some philosophy in its place cannot extirpate the disease or end the sufferings. No purpose will be served by merely casting aspersions on the honesty and sincerity of the Congress rulers. It may be they are no less eager to see the people prosperous and happy than any other set of politicians. If their plans fail to bear fruit and the country is sliding down into slough, if despite their endeavours, poor classes have become poorer, and inefficiency, corruption, rising prices and unemployment have assumed frightful proportions, the reason has to be sought in the philosophy of life which has been and is being sedulously fostered not only by Congressmen but also by the leaders of all shades of Nationalist opinion.

The distinction between Congress party and its nationalist opponents is as between tweedledum and tweedledee because both cherish and glorify the same irrational ancient culture; the difference is not a qualitative one. Where the Congress has, therefore, failed to deliver goods any other nationalist party of the right or the left leanings cannot be expected to do better. In point of fact if the Congress has the Bhagavad-Gita as its guide, its ultra-nationalist opponents whether they know it or not, owe allegiance to the philosophy and ideals of the Anu Gita (rabid Brahminism) with obvious implications.

India's deliverance lies in a mental revolution which would aim at destruction of fatalist outlook of the people. For this we do not need a political party mouthing progressive and leftist slogans and rallying gullible masses to have their votes at the polls for capture of power. What is required is a movement of ideas like the one launched by Paribrajakas (Wanderers) in pre-Buddhist days. Men and women equipped with the weapons of a rationalist philosophy and science, with single-minded devotion to the cause, indifferent to power and with no temptetion to acquire wealth by any means, can be the harbingers of such a revolution and save India from ditch of moral degradation into which it is sinking deeper year after year.

In the history of mankind no country has progressed unless people have displayed zest for life and extended whole-hearted cooperation to their leaders in nation-building schemes. In

contemporary India the labouring masses as well as the middle classes are apathetic and unconcerned about their own welfare. They lack self-confidence and spirit of cooperation even for their own betterment. They lack initiative and have no desire for adventure. But this is hardly surprising. So long as the people are told that the Gita doctrines are the highest ideal of life and Gandhism is the essence of humanism nothing better can be the result. "We have forgotten our adored Mahatma and we have neglected the sublime teachings of the Gita; hence our degradation and misery." This is the refrain of speeches of Hindu leaders including Congress stalwarts. At an international seminar on "Relevance of Gandhi to our Time" held in New Delhi on January 30, 1970, most participants deplored that India had tended to ignore Gandhi's teachings. President Giri who opened the Seminar set the tone by saying that "it was a tragic truth that we in India have not imbibed the teachings of the Father of the Nation." The truth is the other way around. India is on the brink of ruin because *in practice* it follows the ante-diluvian ideas taught by the Mahatma. But no one cares to search after the truth and find out that our misfortunes stem from the spirituality taught by Gandhi and the Gita. Until the incompatibility between the sacred teachings and our this-worldly human aspirations is consciously realised India cannot go ahead and is bound to face failures and frustrations at every step as we have been experiencing during the last 27 years.

It may be argued that the progressive nations of the West have not abolished religion and if they have been able to remove poverty and wretchedness of the masses without dethroning God, why cannot India do so ? A reply to this objection may be given in the words of Swami Vivekananda. Referring to the Western nations and comparing Indians with them he observed :

> "To the other nations of the world, religion is one among the many occupations of life. There is politics, there are the enjoyments of social life, there is all that wealth can buy or power can bring, there is all that sense can enjoy; and among all these various occupations of life and all this searching after something which can give yet a little

> more whetting to the cloyed senses—among all these there is perhaps a little bit of religion. But here in India, religion is the one and the only occupation of life."[7]

Stressing the same point at another place the Swami asseverated :

> "Here in India, it is religion that forms the very core of the national heart. It is the backbone, the bed-rock, the foundation upon which the national edifice has been built—politics, power and even intellect form a secondary consideration here. Religion, therefore, is the one consideration in India."[8]

Since Vivekananda made these observations eighty years ago, the Westerners and the Indians have further advanced on their respective paths. While the former, particularly their youth, have become still less religious, the latter, lacking self-confidence, have learnt from their godmen-leaders whose number is multiplied every year, to have unswerving faith in the transcendental power which is beyond their control and distributes awards or inflicts punishments for actions of helpless human beings.

Brahmin culture contains hardly any liberal or democratic traditions. For thirteen hundred years (fourth to seventeenth century) the Indians have not experienced, much less enjoyed, any social freedoms; they are familiar, and as a matter of fact in love, with despotism; benevolent autocracy has been their utopia. This attitude is an almost unsurmountable hindrance in the path of rising Indian democracy. Of no small significance is the preference of the people to live under constitutional absolutism of the Governor than be ruled by elected representatives who have more often than not proved to be inefficient, corrupt and untrustworthy. Incredibly more than once even Congressmen have joined hands with opposition parties to topple down elected Congress governments. There is no State where Presidents' (Governor's) rule was not imposed at one time or other (in some States more than six times) after the promulgation of the Constitution in 1950. Which reminds one of the verdicts of certain political analysts in pre-Independence days that Indian soil was infertile for growth of democracy.

Confronted with colossal ignorance and counterrevolutionary

attitude of the people, voices are occasionally raised that there must be a change in common thinking before any progress can be achieved. But there is no clear conception of the desired mental change. Nehru, after ruling India for over 12 years, said that "the problem before us is ultimately to change the thinking and activities of hundreds of millions of people."[9] But when, at the same time, he repeatedly stressed that "to deny the past and break with it completely is to uproot ourselves", he either did not grasp the implications of the required change or was speaking with his tongue in his cheek. "How can a people move into the future", emphasised Segal, "let alone the present, when they lock themselves so proudly in the past?... For it involves no less than changing the ageless character of Indian custom, of making vital to the Indian people the community and not caste, the all India's bodies and not each separate soul; the world of gutter and the dam and not the world of shrine and horoscope. It means no less than moving India from the past into the present, to the living and the dying from the dead. And it can come only with the insurrection of desire, with the turning from submission and indifference to rejection and demand."[10]

Nevertheless, the radical change in thinking or in other words a philosophical revolution, is the real and pressing need of India. A set of doctrines formulated in the third or fourth century to defeat the Buddhist Revolution and fully reaffirmed by the Hindu revivalists in the twentieth century to foil secular democratic movement introduced by the British, cannot suit contemporary Indian society aspiring to achieve the high ideal of social democracy.

The present-day India is involved in a big spiritual crisis. Every patriot feels that the country must come abreast with modernity in all walks of life and, reflecting this legitimate desire, the National Government formulates plans to democratize the social set up, to establish equality among all classes of people by raising the down-trodden, to industrialize the country, to rationalize agriculture and to spread scientific education. This must inevitably clash with the scriptural obligations, Gita doctrines and Gandhian theories of life.

Let me illustrate this by an example. One of the big problems facing India is what has come to be called "population explosion." Every year no fewer than 50,00,000 new-born babies are added to 550 million people of whom, as we know, nearly two-thirds live below the poverty line. With limited production of foodstuffs and consumer commodities economic situation worsens by this huge annual increase in population. The Indian Government spends crores of rupees on family planning to check the unbearable growth but all its endeavourse so far have been ineffective. The main reason for it is that the *shastras* (holy scriptures) in which people are taught to repose implicit faith, enjoin every Hindu to have as many children—preferrably boys—as he can; the parents of many children are God's favourites. The Vedas, the Upanishads and the Smritis contain verses which with one voice ordain to procreate. Brahmins and sadhus roam about in the country carrying these holy injunctions of the sacred texts to the people. The political leaders by praising the ancient Brahmin culture strengthen to country's detriment the position of the religious preachers. No wonder the call of family planners falls on deaf ears and the movement for birth control has been a failure.

We can cherish either the Gita philosophy and Gandhism, or reason, science and modernism. It is impossible to have both.

The nationalist parties of whichever hue—right or left—being wedded to the ancient Brahmin culture cannot successfully face the crisis and save the country. It could, however, be expected that other bodies free from constraints of religious traditions and cultural bias would rise to the occasion and pull out India from the slough. At least three of them—Communists, Radical Humanists and Dravida Kazhagam—who claim to be non-religious and rationalistic and espouse secular ideals, deserve notice.

A German Jew by birth Karl Marx (1818-83), father of scientific socialism, was essentially a passionate humanist. A materialist by conviction and rationalist in his beliefs, he likened religion to opium with which down-trodden masses were rendered insensible to miseries suffered by them in an

inequitable social order. His magnum opus, *The Capital*, is a powerful protest of a highly civilised person against the servitude of the labouring majority. He stressed that as one endowed with reason, man will control forces of nature, his surroundings and thereby his own destiny. With the establishment of socialism, he affirmed, human reason will overcome all dogmatic and religious forces which tyrannize the life of man.[11]

In the opinion of Marx an unceasing struggle has been going on in human society between two classes broadly called haves and have-nots. Passing through different phases, the struggle has after advancement of science and consequent industrial development, entered the final stage when the capitalist class possessing all means of production is head-on-clash with the proletariat. Marx had no doubt that the time had arrived when expropriators (capitalists) would themselves be expropriated by the proletariat and the class struggle would end once and for all giving birth to a classless society.

Through economic interpretation of human history Marx came to believe that replacement of capitalist system by classless social order could not be avoided; it was inescapable. His emphasis on economic determinism made a teleology out of his essentially scientific view of history. Like Maskarin Goshala, the Indian philosopher of sixth century, Marx believed in the inevitability of human destiny.

According to the analysis of Marx, a proletarian revolution was to start from industrialized Western Europe where the proletariat was in sufficient number to form the vanguard of the revolution. But it did not come true for it was in the industrially backward Russia that the first socialist state—Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)—came into existence in 1917 after the Great October Revolution.

Since the Russian upheaval did not strictly conform to the Marxist pattern many political thinkers and scientific socialists have cast doubts on the genuineness of the October Revolution. Had Marx been alive, it is surmised he might have refused to recognise it as the legitimate child of his conception. However, there can be no doubt that USSR was the first secular state to come into existence and has exerted

a tremendous influence upon the political, social, and economic trends of the world.

Marx's conclusion that as industrialization advanced there was bound to be polarization of classes in human society—the capitalist class growing fabulously rich and toilers becoming pauperised—did not come to pass. "He was seeking evidence," wrote Trattner, "that capitalism was going to collapse and the working class come to power; he grabbed at every shred that could be used to demonstrate that thesis, and now and then turned his back on important data that were not directly in line with it."[12] Nearly one hundred years after Marx made the prophesy capitalism is still alive and kicking and the working classes under it have, instead of becoming pauperised, witnessed rise in their own standard of life.

In line with his thesis, Marx affirmed that after establishment of socialism the institution of State becoming useless in a classless society, would wither away. But in the USSR which celebrated the golden jubilee of its birth in 1967 no signs are discernible of its withering away; the Russian State has, in fact, grown much more powerful than the state in any capitalist country.

As stated above the Russian Revolution was a freak, a mere accidental occurrence produced by certain peculiar combination of circumstances. That awarencess made Lenin who, as head of the Communist (Bolshevik) Party of Russia, captured power in 1917 think of exporting the Revolution to other countries; for, he thought, the backward Soviet State would not be allowed to exist by the formidable combination of capitalist powers. But wherever the Marxists attempted to make a revolution it ended in disaster. By the very nature of things, Lenin was thus compelled to build in the name of Marxism a powerful nationalist state at any cost. Not only Russian kulaks and bourgeoisie had to be dispossessed of the means of production but the peasants also who were reluctant to follow Bolshevik commands and non-conformist intellectuals who doubted the legitimacy of the Revolution had to be coerced to toe the line. Much of it was a travesty of the humanist principles of Karl Marx. In his book, *Gulag Archipelago*, Alexander

Solzhenitsyn puts the blame for introduction of systematic terror in the new state squarely on Lenin. He notes that Lenin was the first Soviet leader to use the designation "Concentration Camp."[13]

Joseph Stalin (d. 1954) who succeeded Lenin in 1924 got the better of the latter. Known as Iron Dictator, he fortified USSR by industrialisation and expansion of territory. He liquidated millions of Russians including hundreds of intellectuals by torture and slow death in labour camps. He perfected the machinery of oppression and terror. He altered the face of Marxism beyond recognition. He was, however, eminently successful in hoodwinking progressives in general and Marxists in particular outside Russia that he was rearing the first socialist state for the benefit of mankind. It would become, he claimed, a stepping stone to establishment of a classless society in the entire world. Stalin's atrocities and heinous crimes were thoroughly exposed by the Russian Communist leaders in their Twentieth Congress held early in 1956, two years after the ruthless dictator's death. From the startling disclosures made at the Congress it was clear that the human values cherished by Marx did not govern USSR and in the name of socialism it was naked barbarism which prevailed in that good-forsaken land. "Heralded as the salvation of the civilised world, tortured and tormented by capitalist exploitation," wrote M.N. Roy, a former leading light of Communist International, "Communism, in practice, had come to be a spectre, terrifying not only the bourgeoisie; it is causing misgivings even among the progressive forces of the modern world..."[14]

The Indian Communist Party (CPI) is not a spontaneous or natural growth from Marxist seed but an artificial creation of Moscow. Though Communists appeared for the first time in India in early twenties they began to make mark only when Stalin was firmly in the saddle in USSR. The main concern of Indian Communists is not the good of their motherland or the cultural or economic betterment of the Indian people but what helps the socialist fatherland to develop and flourish. As M.R. Masani points out "the activities and fortunes of the Indian Communist Party are not directly inspired or

affected by the condition of the Indian people, their poverty or their prosperity, but by the fortune of the Soviet dictatorship of which they are an appendage. The Indian Communists in practice, though not always in their professions, recognise and accept this dependence."[15]

Never allowed by their mentors much scope for free thought or action, Indian communists have meekly and unabashedly turned somersaults every now and then as directed by Kremlin. Shortly after Independence in their second congress in Calcutta, on February 28, 1948, CPI issued a political thesis holding that though the bourgeois leadership parade the story that independence has been won, the fact is that the freedom struggle has been betrayed and the national leadership has struck a treacherous deal behind the back of the starving people, betraying every slogan of the democratic revolution."[16] The party also condemned the Indian socialists for openly preaching "the illusion that socialism may be achieved by constitutional means."[17] But eight years later in their fourth congress held at Palghat in Kerala in April, 1956, the Party's attitude towards Congress diametrically changed under instructions from Moscow. The new policy declared: "Although the political party of the bourgeoisie which has taken many landlords in its fold the Congress has, among its members, a vast number of democratic elements. It has an anti-imperialist and democratic tradition."[18] The new line was to support the "progressive" policies of Nehru and to applaud the non-aligned foreign policy of the Government as policy of peace.

The most amazing volte face of the communists, however has been in evaluation of Gandhi's philosophy and his role in Indian history. In 1920 when Lenin was alive the *Programme of the Communist International* issued the verdict;

> "Tendencies like Gandhism in India, thoroughly imbued with religious conceptions, idolize the most backward and economically the most reactionary forms of social life, see the solution of the social problem not in proletarian socialism, but in a reversion to these backward forms... Gandhism is more and more becoming an ideology directed against mass revolution. It must be strongly combated by Communism."[19]

Denouncing the Mahatma in 1930 the Communist International remarked :

> "The policy of Gandhism, on which the programme of the Congress is founded, uses a cloak of vague talk about love, meekness, modest and hardworking existence, lightening the burden on the peasantry, national unity, the special historic mission of Hindustan, etc. But under this cloak it preaches and defends the interests of the Indian capitalists, the inevitability and the wisdom of the division of society into rich and poor, eternal social inequality and exploitation."[20]

Until the fifties the communists presented and interpreted Gandhi more or less in his true colours. He was called "the apostle of Indian backwardness, the opponent of industrialization in the country, the bard of spinning wheel and the misery of the village" who played "a negative, obstructive role in the development of the Indian social thought" and "was a defender of spiritual slavery of the Indian people."[21] But when some years after India's Independence the Congress Government and the Soviet leaders became friendly with each other and power politics began to operate in the fifties, the Communists started singing songs in praise of the Mahatma. They went so far as to make changes in the Russian Encyclopaedia and the same communist writers who realistically portrayed the Mahatma earlier declared that "Gandhi was undoubtedly a patriot devoted to the task of liberating his country." The Communists unblushingly confessed that they had been guilty of "incorrect assessment" of Gandhi's role. "Doubtlessly" wrote E. Zhukov, "Gandhi's most valuable quality, one that won him such vast influence and prestige among the people, was his ardent patriotism, his deep faith in the ability and the dignity of Indian People."[22] When the Soviet leaders, Marshall Bulganin and Nikita Khrushchev, toured India in winter 1956 they paid glowing tributes to the greatness of the Mahatma.

No two philosophies are more unlike each other than Brahminism and Marxism, but there is much in common between Brahminism and Russian Communism though the one is God-oriented and the other atheistic; hence the growing closer relations between Congress India and USSR which may

pose a danger in the coming decades to international peace and and World Democracy.

Indian Communists, having failed to capture power through armed insurrection as attempted in Telengana and elsewhere, decided in their fifth congress at Amritsar, in 1958, to fight for democracy and socialism by peaceful means.

Thenceforth to win elections became a passion and since the toiling millions who have the vote under the *Constitution* are superstitious, caste-conscious and religion-ridden, the Communists started competing with the nationalists in catering to the ignorance of the people. They dare not challenge the demoralising beliefs, rites, customs and traditions which have held the Indians in servitude for over 1500 years. So they are no better than nationalists; in fact, Indian communists are nationalists dyed pink.

From early sixties the two communist giants—Russia and China—started drifting apart and soon became openly hostile to each other. The belief sedulously fostered that unlike nationalist-capitalist states which were by nature competitive, jealous and antagonistic to each other, the brotherhood of communists would be unbreakable, proved a myth. The naive intellectuals in free world were disillusioned to find that communism could be as divisive as nationalism. [In India-Sino-Russian differences caused a split in the ranks of the communists. In July 1964 a pro-Chinese section among them, meeting at Tenali in Andhra, resolved to function as a separate party. They regarded themselves as the real Communist-Marxist party of India (CPM). Now two communist parties are functioning in the country in rivarly, not unoften opposing each other in elections, in their differing attitude towards Congress Government and in various other matters.

Working as automatons of foreign communist powers, conniving at, if not actually fostering, Brahmin dogmas and traditions, catering to the superstitious mentality of the ignorant masses and weakened by the widening Russo-Chinese differences, the Communists are unable to play the role of bringing India on path of social revolution.

The case could have been different with the Radical Humanists. As already stated. the main theme of M.N. Roy's

discourses and writings was the foremost need of a philosophical revolution in India. After the Radicals were defeated in the general elections in 1946 they disbanded their party and started a movement with the single object of generating an intellectual climate to bring about the revolution. As an outcome of intensive thinking among Roy and his close associates in a summer camp in 1948, the sponsors of the movement issued a manifesto entitled *New Humanism* indicating how a free society could be brought into being. "We must create an atmosphere of enquiry and free thinking", declared Roy. "That atmosphere can be created here and now, and that is the necessary free condition for free institutions and a better society." Though Roy had ceased to be a Communist his faith in basic philosophy of Karl Marx remained unshaken.

Roy's utmost stress was on reason : "To begin with, the voice of reason must be raised warning the progressive world against the different varieties of orthodoxy and blind passion which are creating the atmosphere of stark madness."[23] The distinctions of race and creed have become meaningless after the discoveries of science. "Today we can state", said Roy "that biologically all men are similarly constructed and hence all men are likely to react more or less in similar way in similar circumstances provided they have a minimum common background of knowledge as the basis for their ability to discriminate, judge and decide."[24] *Chaturvarnya* (four-caste system) should have no place in modern society.

Radicals were convinced that so long as the people remain steeped in religious thought there was no hope for India; only cheats, humbugs and charlatans posing as patriots or godmen can become popular and occupy positions of influence and power. Said Roy :

> "Whoever can appeal to their (people's) most primitive emotions, he will win the contest; and he who appeals to blind religious faith of the masses will most certainly win the scramble, and like this while saying that they are fighting for freedom, they will surely destroy the very root of man's reason and hence his only guarantee to be free."[25]

Decrying the faith in Unseen Power or submission to a Personal God, Roy emphasised :

> "Man must again be the measure of all things. Intelligence, integrity, wisdom and moral excellence should be the test of leadership."

Emancipated men can form the vanguard of the movement for the achievement of philosophical revolution. The Radicals pronounced : "An increasingly large number of men conscious of their creative power, motivated by indomitable will to remake the world, moved by the adventure of ideas, and fired with the ideals of a free society, can create conditions under which democracy will be possible. Spiritually free individuals at the helm of affairs will smash all chains of slavery and usher in freedom for all." [26]

There is no looking backward, no compromise with the Gita doctrines or Gandhism in this programme.

Unfortunately Roy died in 1954 when the Indian intellectuals had begun to realize the truth in what he had repeatedly admonished. It was a great blow to the movement. But undeterred the more earnest among the Radicals have been meeting annually in camps and gatherings to elaborate basic theories and ponder immediate problems keeping in view the sole objective of changing the fatalistic outlook of the people. Having functioned as individual propagandists on their own for twenty years (1948-68) they decided to form an organization—not a political party but an intellectual body, the Radical Humanist Association—to work in an organized manner for reviving positive achievements of the ancient Indian culture, fighting against obscurantism and spreading scientific thought with the purpose of preparing the people for the contemplated mental change. They debunked party politics and did not entertain any idea to capture power for furthering their aims.

Radicals believe that they have kept the banner of Rationalism aloft in India when free thought was being smothered and darkness was closing in from all sides enveloping the country in religious fanaticism. Their mouthpiece the *Radical Humanist* carries a bold declaration in every issue :

> "The purpose of the journal is to encourage scientific and rational thinking in the people. An essential feature in its tradition is to be always ready to champion causes which are opposed to current sentiment but which require to be popularized in the public interest. Not infrequently it exposes those time-honoured ideas and established doctrines which hinder the path of social progress."

In openly opposing Brahmin dogmas, demoralizing beliefs and chauvinistic nationalism, Radicals excel Communists.

But mere pronouncements carry the country nowhere; here as elsewhere, results can be achieved and progress made when professions are followed by practice and rational beliefs are translated in actual life. Unfortunately, in this, Radicals have been found wanting when weighed in the balance.

Though spread all over India, the number of Radicals does not exceed a thousand. Fewer of these few are the emancipated of Roy's conception. Practising rationalists are a rarity indeed. Their impact on the thinking of the society is further lessened because though frank and forthright in their criticism of Hindu nationalism, they are overwhelmed by it during the days of crisis. For example when Indo-Pak wars broke out in1947, 1965 and 1971 most of them speedily joined the nationalist forces and did not have the courage to say a word against the hazardous adventurism of their rulers. In 1947 Roy was alive and as could be expected, he unequivocally denounced Nehru and his Government for accepting the accession offer of the Kashmir Maharaja against the obvious inclination of the State people, an overwhelming majority of whom is Muslim. He wrote a series of articles exposing the weakness of the Indian case. But most of the Radicals sheepishly followed the popular trend either driven to it by their own religious prejudices or finding it safer to support the National Government. Again in 1971, the Radicals, affected by the upsurge of Hindu chauvinism, were swept off their feet. True to their creed they should have fearlessly exposed the motives of Hindu nationalism along with the inhuman doings of the Pakistan military regime. But oblivious of their humanist philosophy, the Radicals, of course with honourable exceptions, supported

India's armed intervention in East Bengal. They could not draw a distinction between the moral case of the East Bengalis which deserved fullest support and the evil intentions of Hindu nationalists which merited denunciation.

To maintain balance in normal time is praiseworthy but to adhere to the highest ideal of rationalism at the time of crisis in individual or group life is heroic and a real achievement. If Radical Humanists are to be judged by their behaviour at crucial moments of contemporary history they have, I am sorry to remark, failed in the test. If the movement for bringing about intellectual revolution in India founded by M.N. Roy has not made much progress after him the reason for it must be sought in the failure of his followers to stand by their doctrines and convictions during the days when the Indians needed their guidance. Nevertheless some of the staunchest non-conformists among the Hindus I have met in my life are to be found in the Radical Humanists Association.

A stronger movement to destroy religious mode of thought has spread in South India, particularly in Tamil Nadu. Led by the Dravida Kazhagam under the leadership of the redoubtable Naicker, the movement has gained sufficient ground after Independence. The practical measures adopted by the leaders of the movement to achieve their end have sometimes been deplored as aggressive, perhaps rightly, by some critics. But despite certain exceptionable extravagances which may have appeared and developed as reaction to the high-handedness of Brahmins, the movement has had a remarkable success during the past years.

Erode Venkatappa Ramaswami Naicker was born in the family of a wealthy businessman in September 1879. A self-willed boy, he had very little formal education but, early in life, he imbibed liberal views and had hankering for social justice. While yet a young man he engaged himself as a fighter against what he considered evil in Hindu society. His courage and reformist zeal were appreciated by poorer classes. When, in 1919, Gandhi started the non-cooperation campaign he joined the Congress and courted imprisonment by participating in anti-British agitation. He was, however, soon disillusioned with the Congress ideals and its leadership. He resigned in

protest against the segregation of the Brahmin and non-Brahmin boys in a Congress-run hostel. This proved to be a turning point in his life as thenceforth he never associated himself with Hindu nationalist elements. He declared that the Congress was "a sectarian organisation of Brahmins and baniyas (Hindu businessmen) who are trying to replace by themselves the benevolent British regime." No Indian democrat, he advised, should have any truck with them.

Parting company with the Congress, Naicker launched what came to be known as Self-Respect Movement, its object being to end the oppression of low caste Hindus by conceited Brahmins. He was totally opposed to caste system and its pernicious offshoot untouchability. He wrote scores of scathing articles bitterly criticizing Congress ideology in various journals which he edited. The main aim behind his writings was in his own words, "to oppose the conception of God, casteism, Gandhi, Congress and the Brahmins". Starting as an opponent of the Congress and Gandhi, Naicker, step by step, became a rationalist-materialist and an inveterate enemy of Hindu social system. He freely gave expression to his atheistic views and heretic beliefs. At one time he organized an intensive campaign against "the tyranny of deism" and systematically broke images of Hindu gods and goddesses. He claimed to be a *Vedavirodaka* (opponent of the Vedas) and frequently denounced Brahmin scriptures.

In 1938, Naicker assumed the leadership of the pro-British Justice Party which voiced the feelings and aspirations of non-Brahmins in Madras Presidency; sometime later he renamed the Party as Dravida Kazhagam which he led until his death. The main aim of the rechristened body was to achieve "freedom of the Dravida South from the domination of the Aryan North." Ever since he broke with the Congress in 1925 his consuming passion had been to destroy what he considered to be the Brahminical hold not only on politics but on religion and social life of the Hindus.

Uncompromising in his views, Ramaswami Naicker swam against the powerful current of Hindu nationalism and the mass struggles launched by Gandhi against British rule. He visited some foreign lands, including Soviet Russia, in early thirties

and was fascinated by the organization and achievement of Communism, but only for a spell. He soon discovered the ugly and repellant aspects of the Soviet life, particularly its intolerancce of dissent. When the Second World War broke out in 1939, he enthusiastically supported the British against Nazi Germany believing that the former were engaged in life and death struggle to protect World Democracy. This brought him closer to the Radical Democrats (now Radical Humanists) who held similar views. In recognition of the identity of aims, he attended the Radical Conference in Calcutta in 1944. Throughout the rest of his life he remained on friendly terms with the Radicals and accepted the basic theories of their philosophy. His only regret was that the Radicals were more doctrinaire and less practical and aggressive.

After India's liberation from British rule, Naicker relentlessly continued to fight against Brahmin domination which, he thought, had become more powerful. He opposed the Indian Constitution of 1950 on the plea that it was advantageous to the upper castes and instrumental in strengthening Brahmin hold. He disliked imposition of Hindi in Devnagri script as national language. Assisted by his followers "he tarred Hindi name boards in railway stations, burnt copies of the Constitution of India because it contains provisions for thrusting Hindi on non-Hindi people and because it contains safeguards for reactionary and obscurantist values."[27]

In the fifties, Naicker vigorously demanded secession of the Dravida South from Aryan North to enable the people in his part of the country to live free from Brahmin tyranny and forge their own future by true democratic methods. Towards the end of his days, however, he shed his separatist tendencies but continued to campaign against Hindu Nationalism.

On January 23, 1972, a Superstition Eradication Conference was held at Salem in Tamil Nadu by Dravida Kazhagam. In it speeches were made and resolutions passed "denouncing false beliefs and harmful observances which eat into the vitals of the Hindu community." To demonstrate earnestness of the participants, a procession caricaturing mythical divinities in various tableux was taken out through the public streets and slogans raised against Brahminism and the deities of the puranas.

Sri Rama, the hero of the Brahmin Epic, *Ramayana*, symbolizing Hindu culture and morality, was the chief target of attack.

For his unswerving devotion to the objective of social justice, for boldness to stand by truth and, above all, for the selfless services which he rendered to the forlorn cause of down-trodden millions of India, Ramaswami Naicker was endearingly called *Periyar* (the great man) by the Tamilians. A few weeks before his death he told his followers in a conference in Madras that he would launch "do or die" agitation from January 26, 1974, if the Central Government failed to scotch the provisions of the Constitution directly or indirectly supporting religion. He did not live to implement this resolve.

Periyar was a social reformer, an iconoclast, *bete noir* of the Congress, stormy petrel in the Dravida politics who commanded respect of the common people and every shade of political opinion. President Giri called him "a colourful leader" and "always a fighter." Prime Minister Indira Gandhi described him as one "who revelled in controversy" and "challenged many accepted notions."

When Naicker died on December 24, 1973 at the venerable age of 92, gloom descended on Tamil Nadu and there was spontaneous hartal (stoppage of work) and mourning in the whole state; hundreds wept at the parting of the hero. His body was brought to Madras city and placed for public view in Rajaji Hall. The State Government ordered a two-day mourning and closure of all government offices and educational institutions. The funeral took place with full police honours on 25th December. Never during the past fifteen hundred years was a non-conformist and an atheist so highly honoured in India as Periyar.

In recognition of the lifelong work he did for the growth of rational thought and secular morality, life-size statues of Naicker have been erected in different cities of Tamil Nadu with legends like "God does not exist, God does not exist at all, "He who propitiates god is a scoundrel" and "He who worships God is a barbarian." The Ministers of Tamil Nadu Government and a large number of intellectuals participated in the inaugural ceremonies of the statues and multitudes cheered them.

Naicker has left behind a charitable trust to continue

the movement against religion and social inequalities. The trust is believed to possess properties valued over rupees one crore.

The significance of the Dravida Kazhagam movement lies in its power to draw an increasing number of people for whom the charm of Brahminism is broken. There is open and fearless criticism of scriptures, of gods, of priests and their rituals and of Brahmin nationalism in general. It is significant that a non-Congress political party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), swept the polls in Tamil Nadu in 1971 general elections with the support of Periyar and his followers and despite the fierce opposition of the Hindu nationalists.

The DMK has abandoned the idea of carving out a separate sovereign state of Dravidsthan which it entertained when the Congress ruled all over the country including Tamil Nadu. But after capturing power in the state DMK Government formulated plans to weaken Hindu Nationalism and to abolish caste distinctions and the hold of Brahminism on the people. The first step in this direction was the establishment of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Department which brought Hindu religious places and trusts, nearly twelve thousand in number, under State control. Next the monopoly of Brahmins to be priests of temples was broken. The Department insisted to appoint any one as priest. In 1971, the *archakas* (priests) were ordered to pick up thorough knowledge of Tamil instead of traditional Sanskrit. Two years later they were ordered that *archana* (worship of idols) should be offered in Tamil and in Sanskrit only when worshippers wanted it. If *archakas* failed to do so, they would be replaced by *aduvars* who are not priests but employed to sing *thevarams* (Tamil songs) and for this they would be entitled to share cash collection after *archana*. The management of the temples is no longer in the hands of the Brahmins but is shared by members of backward classes and by untouchables.[28]

The DMK Government announced, to the annoyance of Hindu nationalists, that it will grant life pensions to those anti-Hindi agitators who suffered imprisonment under a former Congress government of Tamil Nadu and they will be treated as fighters for freedom of India.

It should be obvious that the orthodox sections are not happy with the popularity of the DMK heretics. The Union Government views with concern the changes effected by the State Government and not infrequently attempts to curb its power as it can do under the Indian Constitution. For that reason DMK is anxious to get the Constitution heavily amended.

Tamil Nadu Government passed a resolution on April 16, 1974, demanding changes in the Constitution in order "to establish a truly federal set up with full autonomy." The aim of the suggested changes was "the setting up of a true federation, with a Federal Government having powers only relating to defence, foreign policy, inter-state communications and currency and the States having all the other powers including the residuary power."

Apart from abolition of the Planning Commission the resolution recommended "repeal of the Industries Department and Regulation Act, drastic reduction of the scope of the Supreme Court with its conversion into a virtual constitutional court, and abolition of the office of the Governor as well as the services like the IAS and IPS."[29]

Short of partition DMK wants Tamil Nadu to be a separate entity and enjoy complete freedom from the overlordship of Aryan (Hindu) Nationalism in order that rationalist culture may flourish in that part of the country.

It is not without significance that in 1949 Indian Rationalist Association was founded in Madras to inculcate the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reasons and rejects all arbitrary assumptions of authority. Dr. R.P. Paranjpye was its founder and first President. S. Ramanathan, sometime Congress Minister in Madras State, was the moving spirit of the Association until his death in 1971. The Association has branches in South India and it runs a journal, *The Indian Rationalist*, to propagate for its objectives. Though not very active, the Association has been rendering silent service to the cause of Indian Renaissance for the last twenty-five years.

It was the counter-revolution started by the masters like Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva and Vallabha from the South

which finally destroyed Buddhism and suppressed rational thought in this country. No wonder, a new revolution to destroy Brahminism and revive free thought may also originate from Dravida Desha and spread all over India.

For the present, nevertheless, despite this silver lining, the sky is overcast with thick black clouds and the perspective is bleak.

The biggest problem of the Indian society, unsolved for 1500 years, is how to break the intellectual steel-frame of the Brahmins and release 550 million people from the shackles of spiritual slavery.

The most important change in the country after the last British Viceroy left for home is the introduction of adult suffrage for elections to legislatures in which nearly two hundred million Indians go to the polls. Instead of nurturing a spirit of common nationality, the elections strengthen caste division. The choice of party candidates is determined by the predominant caste affiliations of each constituency; caste politics influences party politics; alliances and counter-alliances are formed by caste considerations. Thus the caste system remains evergreen in Indian society despite pious declarations that Congress Government is pledged to its abolition.

Adhering tenaciously to the caste system, old superstitions and traditions, an educated Hindu can feign to be indifferent to religion and devoted to human values. He can interpret every branch of science—physics, bacteriology and biology—to uphold the underlying truth of hoary dogmas. "It was proclaimed that if a Hindu kept a pigtail it was only as an electromagnetic coil", wrote Nirad Chaudhury; "if he bathed in the Ganges it was because an unspecified European (for perference, German) scientist had demonstrated that Ganges water killed bacteria instantaneously; if he fasted at full and new moon it was only to counteract the gravitational forces of the sun and the moon; the Diwali illumination was supposed to be a collective lighting of fire for burning up the poisonous gases given off by the earth on that evening."[30] This comment is not meant to be a pleasantry for the average educated Hindu believes in such claptrap and passes on the belief to millions of illiterate men and women.

Knowing the history of Hindu culture one cannot be optimistic about the future of rationalist thought in India. Brahminism has been able to withstand and absorb heretic shocks and not only survive but has in the process vanquished two philosophical revolutions. Even in the seventh decade of the twentieth century it is as alive as ever. Despite the onslaught of science and philosophy the Brahminical institutions, dogmas and rituals stand in their hoary sanctity. A Hindu be he highly educated is timid, if not scared, to defy them. Whatever his professions to the contrary, he meekly submits to the dictates of tradition laid down by the holy shastras and explained by the *purohits*. A Hindu scientist has two selves, one in the laboratory which is rational and materialistic and another outside the laboratory which is religious and superstitious. Delhi TV presenting the busy life of a well-known scientist, proudly showed him spending the best part of his day worshipping stone idols, his home adorned with pictures of deities; his scientific achievements paled into insignificance. And this is no rare occurrence on TV or with All India Radio which are frequently utilized to fortify superstitions and inculcate faith in the absurdities of Brahminism. Therefore the Indian people's struggle for freedom from this ancient enslaver is very hard indeed.

However, we should not forget that the twentieth century is not the fourth century when the Bhagavad-Gita was composed and its author could lead the Indians astray by raising radical slogans of Samkhya and carrying the day for the Vedanta. Science is advancing with terrific speed, physical barriers have fallen down, different races and people are coming closer; men have gone to *chandra lok* (world of moon), not in spirit after death as reward for pious work as the *shastras* tell us, but in physical body assisted by science and technology.

As Erich Fromm puts it: "Man commands forces thousands of times stronger than the ones nature had given him before; steam, oil, electricity, have become his servants and beasts of burden. He crosses the oceans, the continents—first in weeks, then in days, now in hours. He seemingly overcomes the law of gravity, and flies through the air; he converts deserts into fertile land, makes rain instead of praying for it."[31] Today

man—every man—can be provided with the physical and mental needs enabling him to enjoy life to its full. Only religious mode of thinking and the fatalistic outlook on life can keep him in backwaters of history and slough of wretchedness in which overwhelming majority of the Indians wallow.

The industrial-technical class is rapidly expanding in India; the managers and technicians realize by experience that unity and equality of men is a necessary condition for development, and divisive forces, impediments to progress, must be annihilated. There is the largely augmented commercial class in India looking across the borders for enlarging its interests. Their is the steadily mounting economic, social and ideological pressure from foreign countries. Thus the institution of *chaturvarnya* is overrun in one way and undermined by another. The days of Brahminism are being numbered. Only the awakened, determined and forward-looking Indians should help to bring the day of its annihilation nearer.

Many of us in India feel astonished and envious, at the spectacular progress made by the Chinese during almost the same period that we have been free. "To a greater extent," says Leo Goodstadt, "than in any other Asian agricultural economy, Peking has escaped from its traditional dependence on nature."[35] The Chinese are better housed and better fed. Practically the entire population is covered by an efficient and very cheap health-care service which is the envy of even some developed countries. There is no bribery, no corruption, no wastage, no price-hike and no black money. Cleanliness has become a habit and rubbish disallowed to exist; flies and mosquitoes have been altogether destroyed leading to elimination of many a disease.

Danial Latifi, Supreme Court Lawyer, who visited China fifteen years ago and again this year (1974) in May as leader of Kotnis Memorial Committee Delegation, revealed that no one seemed idle or unemployed in that country. He said that prices of essential commodities remained stable over the last fifteen years, children looked the chubbiest and best cared for. He did not see either very poor or very affluent among the Chinese as income disparity had been reduced drastically; Airline pilots and bus drivers are paid almost the same salary; the lowest paid

Chinese workers earn a minimum of Rs. 150.00 a month. "The most remarkable thing about Chinese factories and production centres was that the wage bill of the management did not normally exceed 5 per cent of the total expenditure." Latifi mentioned some of the tantalisingly low and stable prices of daily needs in China: Wheat 80 paise kg, rice Rs. 1-20 a kg, mutton Rs. 5.10 a kg, chicken Rs. 6/-, fish Rs. 2-40, cauliflower 80 paise, eggs Rs. 2.70 a dozen, kerosene Rs. 1.80 a litre.[33]

As against this we wallow in filth; large slums are growing in cities and villages continue to be dirty as ever. Seventy per cent of India's children go hungry of whom over a million die every year. We have been successful in building a vast network of exploitation and corruption to facilitate plunder by ten per cent upper class minority of 90 per cent down-trodden masses.

Why this difference between the social condition of two Asian peoples ? To silence their conscience and unwilling to face the truth many nationalists say that China has achieved the success by killing millions of disloyal workers, sacrificing democracy and accepting totalitarianism, the tremendous cost which India is not prepared to pay. There may be a point in this defence. But the real reason lies in the determination of the Chinese leaders to plan and organize their society rationally. They did not hesitate to demolish the sacred and cherished traditions, usages, customs and superstitions if, and when, they obstructed social progress.

Despite their hatred of Anglo-American Imperialism, the Chinese welcomed the positive achievements of Western culture. For example to derive maximum advantage from world literatures and spare students the drudgery of cumbersome Chinese script they unhesitatingly introduced Roman script for their language and dialects.

Chinese worship Confucious, the ancient master and admire his philosophy which, like the Gita-doctrines, is counterrevolutionary and antidemocratic in essence. The leaders could not help observing that so long as the Chinese looked to the venerable sage with reverence and followed his sayings as eternal truths no radical change in their outlook on life could be effected. Mao tse-tung personally led the people to criticise Confucius and held him up as the patron saint of exploiters.

Study classes were formed throughout the length and breadth of the country to critically study Confucianism and denounce it. It gave rise to rifts in the provinces where the sage had been revered for centuries but the leaders did not waver and the agitation was carried on unabated. The campaign against Confucius will be carried to the end, declared Chou en-lai, on February 24, 1974, because the old master was a reactionary who tried to turn back the wheel of history.

There is much in Chinese Communism which no democrat will appreciate or approve; some of it is repellant. But here is a lesson for India to learn. We too need a cultural revolution to bring about drastic changes in the outlook of the people which alone can usher in a social revolution leading to real all-round progress. To that end we shall have to study and understand the essence of Gita philosophy and real nature of Gandhism without any regard to the sanctity that is being attached to them. We have been too long struck and spiritually cowed down by their awe.

Real knowledge based on discoveries of science is within the grasp of everyone. India, like any other country, has become a part of the world in the sense it was never before. The tactics of the author of the Gita can no longer succeed in keeping the Indians in the thraldom of Brahminism. One after another the cherished theories of the hoary creed are being demolished by science based on reason. There is no need to depend on unseen Supreme Being or surrender to Personal God. Man is becoming the maker of his destiny and the forger of his future. "We can now create," says G. Rattary Taylor, "on a commercial scale by chemical processes substances which never previously existed. Whereas before we had to make do with what nature provided, now we can decide what we want; this may be called chemical control. Similarly in the coming century we shall achieve biological control; the power to say how much life, of what sort, shall exist. We shall even be able to create forms of life which never existed before."[34]

In the dissemination of knowledge and spread of scientific ideas on as wide a scale as possible lies the hope of the Indian people. For the first time in its history, Brahminism is coming to a head-on-collision with its deadliest foe, the Reason. The

triumphant adversary is closing in from all sides; the old priest is losing control over society. But let us not be complacent; the ancient master of dupery will not surrender without a last ditch battle. In collaboration with other reactionary and anti-people forces of the world huge efforts are afoot to run down science and reason and to resuscitate religion in new forms and garbs. In an absorbing volume about the future of human society Alvin Toffler observes :

> "One response to the loss of control, for example, is a revulsion against intelligence. Science first gave man a sense of mastery over his environment, and hence over the future. By making the future seem malleable instead of immutable it shattered the opiate religions that preached passivity and mysticism. Today, mounting evidence that society is out of control breeds disillusionment with science. In consequence, we witness a garish revival of mysticism. Suddenly astrology is the rage. Zen, Yoga, seances and witch-craft become popular pastimes. Cults form around the search for Dionysian experience, for non-verbal and supposedly non-linear communication. We are told it is more important to "feel" than to think as though there were a contradication between the two. Existentialist oracles join catholic mystics, Jungian psychoanalysts and Hindu gurus in exalting the mystical and emotional against the scientific and rational."[35]

For over three thousand years Brahmins used every means to exploit and oppress the toiling millions but when today science and technology are opening newer and vaster avenues of progress and making it possible for every human being to be free and live a comfortable life, Hindu philosophers denounce modern civilisation in the name of mystical moral standards and fanciful human values.

We have seen how fanatically Gandhi did it in his book *Hind Swaraj.* He was never tired of running down science and technology which, he repeatedly stressed, was satanical and corrupted humanity. "Given that a majority of men still figuratively live in the twelfth century", asks Toffler, "who are we even to contemplate throwing away the key to economic advance ? Those who prate anti-technological nonsense in the name of some vague 'human values' need to the asked which

human? To deliberately turn back the clock would be to condemn billions to enforced and permanent misery at precisely the moment in history when their liberation is becoming possible. We clearly need not less but more technology."[36]

So long as Indian life is dominated by the Brahmin theology there can be no end to caste and communal animosities. One caste against another. Hindu against Muslim, Bengali against Assami, Andhra against Telengana and Brahmin against all, will continue to be the prevailing condition. What can bind all Indians in a common nationhood is not religious emotion, divine affinity or fear of God but the potential element of rationality or the faculty of reasoning with which every human being is endowed. India has to train young men and women to adopt a rational outlook on life, learn to be tolerant of dissent and put under restraint personal, caste and communal prejudices. If we must obtain inspiration from our past consistent with our present aspirations it can be only from either the Buddhist Revolution or the Nineteenth Century secular outlook. We must resume the threads which were snapped fifteen hundred years ago by the teaching of the Gita and again by the militant revivalist movement in the early part of the present century.

Hinduism is today caught in the gravest crisis of its history due to the rapid advance of scientific civilisation which is penetrating into every field of social life in India. In the coming life and death struggle the Hindu Nalionalist will seek an opportunity to survive by outwardly welcoming science and technology but actually adhering to the "spiritual" culture in the hope that the speed of revolution will be slowed down until a way is found out to strike a death-blow at it. Herein lies the task of a freedom fighter to get rid of Brahminism and liberate Indian humanity. Welcoming all plans of the Nationalists for promotion of science and technology, he must expose the incompatibility between the basic theories of science on the one side and the cardinal doctrines of the Gita and the objectives of Gandhism on the other. It must be made manifest that the two cannot stand together or even side by side. We have to opt for the one or the other.

And anyone who desires the welfare of impoverished and brutalised millions of this vast land will choose science and

technology in place of the Gita and Gandhism. By doing so he will no doubt disturb a hornet's nest but, undaunted and undeterred, let him go forward remembering what one of the greatest sons of Indian Renaissance, Sir C. V. Raman, told the students in Bombay in 1932 :

> "We live in an age of science. Most people think that science has served humanity by producing electric light, motor cars, aeroplanes, etc. That is only a partial view. In fact, few realize the outlook that science has produced during the last two hundred years. Science has given us a new view of the universe...The future of India depends on a courageous application of scientific knowledge. As man learns to apply the scientific method to the problems of every day life, in that measure he will rise to and reach his allotted height. Let the dogs of conservatism, ignorance and fanaticism bark, but the glorious caravan of the Indian nation will move on with irresistible force."[37]

A Select Bibliography

A list of more important books and journals which have been mentioned or quoted by me in this study. There are many more publications which have been consulted and used in the preparation and completion of this work, but they are not listed here.

Ambedkar, B.R., *Ranade, Gandhi, Jinnah*, Bheem Patrika, Jullundur, 1964.

Arnold, Sir Edwin, *The Song Celestial*, Kegan Paul, London, 1930.

Atmanada, Swami, *Sankara's Teaching in His own words*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1960.

Azad, Maulana Abul Kalam, *India Wins Freedom*, Orient Longmans, 1959.

Bahm, J. Archie, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Somaiya Publications, Bombay, 1970.

Baig, M.R.A., *In Different Saddles*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1967.

Basham, A.L., *The Wonder that was India*, Orient Longmans, Bombay, 1963.

Basu, B.D., *Rise of Christian Power in India*, R. Chatterjee, Calcutta, 1931,

Bazaz, Prem Nath, *Whither India after Independence?* Pamposh Publications, New Delhi, 1970.

Bernard, Theos., *Hindu Philosophy*, Greenwood Press Publishers, New York, 1963.

Besant, Mrs. Annie., *The Bhagavad-Gita,* G.A, Natesan, Madras, 1907.

Bhattacharyya, Naren., *Ancient Indian Atheistic Movements*, Radical Humanist Publication, 1962.

Bhave, Vinoba, *Talks on the Gita*, Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Varanasi, 1970.

Bhattacharyya, Dakshiranjan, *History of Philosophy—Eastern and Western*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1952.

Bose, A.C., *The Call of the Vedas*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1960,

Bose, Atindra Nath, *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India*, (600 B.C.—200 A.D.), K.L. Mukhopadhyaya, Calcutta, 1961.

Bouquet, A.C., *Sacred Books of the World,* Penguin, London, 1967.

Chhatopadhyay, Debiprasad, *Lokayata*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1959.

Chhatopadhyay, Debiprasad, *Indian Philosophy*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1964.

Chidbhavananda, Swami, *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Rama Krishna Tapovanam, 1971.

Chaudhury, Nirad., C. *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1971.

Colwell E.B. and Gough A.E. (Translators), *Sarva Darsana Samgraha*, Chowkhamba, Varanasi, 1961.

Coomaraswami A.K. and Horner. I.B., *The Living thoughts of Gotama, the Buddha.* Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1956.

Das, Bhagwan, *Thus Spoke Ambedkar*, Bheem Patrika, Jullundur, 1969.

Davids, T.W. Rhys., *Buddhist India,* Susil Gupta, Calcutta, 1959.

De Witt, Norman Wentworth, *Epicurus and His Philosophy*, University of Minnesota Press, 1954.

Divatia, H.V., *The Art of Life in the Bhagavad-Gita*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1952.

Diwakar, R.R., *Paramahamsa Sri Ramakrishna*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1970.

Diwakar, R.R., *Mahayogi*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1972.

Durant, Will., *The Story of Philosophy*, Clarion Books, New York, 1967.

Edwardes, Michael, *The Last Years of British India.* New Mentor, London, 1967.

Edwardes, Michael, *Raj*, Pan Books, London, 1967.

Gajendragadkar, K.V., *Neo-Upanishadic Philosophy*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1959.

Fromm, Erich, *The Sane Society*, A Fowceth Premier Book, 1955.

Gandhi, M.K., *The Teaching of the Gita*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1971.

Gandhi, M.K., *Hind Swaraj* (*Indian Home Rule*), Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1962.

Gandhi, M.K., *The Science of the Satyagraha*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1970.

Ghose, Sri Aurobindo, *Reason and Beyond Reason*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1963.

Ghose, Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1970.

Gupta, Nagendranath, *Seven Noble Lives*, Hind Kitabs, 1950.

Hay, N. Stephen, *Asian Ideas of East and West*, Harvard University Press, 1970.

Havell, E.B., *History of Aryan Rule in India*, George G. Harrap, London.

Hill, W. Dougals P., *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Oxford University Press, 1969.

Humphreys, Christmas, *Buddhism*, Pelican, 1964.

Joshi, Laxman Shastri., *A Critique of Hinduism*, Modern Age Publication, Bombay, 1948.

Jacobi., *Sacred Books of the East.*

Kalghatgi T.G., *Jain View of Life*, Jaina S.S. Samgha, Sholapur, 1969.

Keer, Dhananjay., *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1962.

Keith, A. Berriedale., *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, Oxford University Press, 1970.

Keith, A.B., *Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upanishads*, Oxford University Press, 1970.

Khair, G.S., *Quest for the Original Gita*, Somaiya Publications, Bombay, 1969.

Khosala, G.D., *The Murder of the Mahatma*, Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1963.

Koestler, Arthur, *The Lotus and the Robot*, Hutchinson, London, 1961.

Kosambi, D.D., *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historic Outline*, Routledge and Kegan Paul., London.

Kosambi, D.D., *Myth & Reality*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1962.

Kripalani, J.B., *Gandhi—His Life and Thought*, Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1970.

Lal, R.B., *The Gita in the Light of Modern Science*, Somaiya Publications, Bombay, 1970.

Macdonell., *History of Sanskrit Literature*.

Majumdar, R.C., General Editor., *The History and Culture of the Indian People*. (Vol, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11), Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

Martin, Britain Jr., *New India, 1885*, Oxford University Press, 1970.

Masani, M.R., *The Communist Party of India*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1967.

Mookerji, Radha Kumud, *Hindu Civilisation Parts I and II*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1963.

Moon, Penderel, *Wavell : the Viceroy's Journal*, Oxford University Press, London, 1973.

Narasu, P.L., *The Essence of Buddhism*, Thacker & Co., Bombay, 1948.

Nehru, Jawaharlal, *India—Today and Tomorrow*, Indian Council of Cultural Relations, New Delhi, 1959.

Nehru, Jawaharlal, *Glimpses of World History*, Lindsay Drumond, London, 1949.

Nehru, Jawaharlal, *Autobiography*, Allied Publishers, Bombay, 1940.

Nehru, Jawaharlal, *The Discovery of India*, Meridian Books, Bombay, 1951.

Panikkar, K.M., *Essential Features of Indian Culture*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1964.

Poole, S. Lane, *Mediaeval India*, (Two Vols), Susil Gupta, Calcutta, 1951.

Prakasha, Sri, *Annie Besant*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1969.

Prasad, Ishwari., *A New History of India*. The Indian Press, Allahabad, 1970.

Pusalkar, A.D., *Studies in Epics and Puranas of India*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1963.

Radhakrishnan, S., *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*.

Radhakrishnan, S., *The Bhagavad-Gita*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1970.

Radhakrishnan, S., (With Charles A. Moore), *A Source Book of Indian Philosophy*, Princeton University Press, 1957.

Radhakrishnan, S., *The Hindu View of Life*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1940.

Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, (2 Vol), George Allen & Unwin, London, 1926.

Rajgopalacharya, C., *Upanishads*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1963.

Rajgopalacharya, C., *Bhagavad-Gita*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1970.

Rajgopalacharya, C., *Hinduism : Doctrine and Way of Life*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1964.

Rajgopalacharya, C., *The Mahabharata*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1962.

Ranade, R.D., *Bhagavad-Gita*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1965.

Rao, V.K.R.V., *The Gandhian Alternative to Western Socialism*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1970.

Rao, Nagaraj P., *Introduction to Vedanta*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1958.

Raju, P.T., *The Philosophical Tradition of India*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971.

Rao, P. Kodanda, *Foreign Friends of India's Freedom*, PT I, Book Co., Bangalore, 1973.

Ray, Niharranjan, *Nationalism in India*, Aligarh University, 1973.

Reyna, Ruth., *Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, Tata McGraw-Hill, Publishing Co., Bombay, 1971.

Roy, M.N., *Heresies of the Twentieth Century*, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta, 1943.

Roy, M.N., *Science and Philosophy*, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta, 1947.

Roy, M.N., *The Philosophy and Practice of Radical Humanism*, Radical Humanist Association, New Delhi-1970.

Roy, M.N., *Materialism*, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta, 1951.

Roy, M.N., *New Humanism*, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta, 1953.

Roy, M.N., *India's Message*, Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta, 1950.

Roy, M.N., *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, (Two Volumes), Renaissance Publishers, Calcutta, 1952.

Russel, Bertrand., *A History of Western Philosophy*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1948.

Santinatha, Sadhu, *The Critical Analysis of the Dualistic Philosophy*, (Vedanta), Author, 1938.

Sarma, D.S., *The Upanishads, An Anthology*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1964.

Sarma, D.S., *Hinduism Through the Ages*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1962.

Schillp, Paul Arthur., *The Philosophy of Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan*, Tudor Publishing Co., 1952.

Sen, G.E., *Cultural Unity of India*, Government of India, New Delhi, 1956.

Sen, S.N., *Eighteen Fifty-Seven*, Publications Division, Government of India, 1957.

Shastri, D., *A Short History of Indian Materialism and Hedonism*, Bookland, Calcutta, 2957.

Sharma, B.N.K., *Madhava's Teachings in His own Words*,, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1961.

Shaw. G.B., *The Adventures of the Black Girl in Her Search for God*. Constable & Co., London, 1932.

Sibnis, P.J., *Charwak*, R.L., Foundation, Bombay, 1956.

Singh, Dr. Karan, *Prophet of Indian Nationalism*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1963.

Spear, Percival., *A History of India, Vol. II*, Pelican, 1972.

Stein, M.A., *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, 1961.

Taylor, Rattrey G., *The Biological Time Bomb*, Panthar Science, New York, 1970.

Thapar, Romila., *Ashoka and the Decline of the Mauriyas*, Oxford University Press, 1961.

Thapar, Romila., *A History of India, Vol. I.*, Pelican, London, 1966.

Thompson, Edward and G.T. Garrott, *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule i n India*, Central Book Depot, Allahabad, 1969.

Tilak, B.G., *Bhagavad-Gita Rahasya*, Tilak Brothers, Poona, 1665.

Toffler, Alvin, *Future Shock*, Bantam Books, New York, 1970.

Tolstoy, Count Leo, *Confessions and What I Believe*, Oxford University Press, 1951.

Winternitz, M., *A History of Indian Literature*, (Two Vols.), University of Calcutta, 1927.

Woodruff, Philip, *The Men who Ruled in India*, (Two Vols.), Jonathan Cape, London, 1963.

Zimmer, Heinrich., *Philosophies of India*, Kegan Paul, London, 1952.

Periodicals.

The *Indian Review*, Madras.

Bhavan's Journal, Bombay.

The *Janata*, Bombay.

The *Radical Humanist*, New Delhi.

The *Rationalist*, London.

The *Illustrated Weekly of India*, Bombay.

Journals.

The *Statesman*, New Delhi.

The *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi.

The *Indian Express*, New Delhi.

The *Times of India*, New Delhi.

Footnotes

CHAPTER 1

1. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. I, p. 129.
2. *Ibid*, p. 196.
3. *Ibid*, p. 197.
4. *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I, p. 128.
5. *Ibid*, p. 129.
6. *Ibid*, p. 75.
7. *RV*, ii, 12.9. Translation of the Vedic hymns given in this chapter with slight variations here and there, is by A.C. Bose as in his book, *The Call of the Vedas*.
8. *RV*. vi, 24.8.
9. *RV*, viii, 21.6.
10. *YV*, viii, 53.
11. *Ibid*, 36.24.
12. *RV*, x. 158-4.
13. *AV*, xix, 60.
14. *RV*, i, 89, 9.
15. *RV*, vii, 54,2.
16. *RV*, x, 128.1.
17. *RV*, vii, 4.7.
18. *SV*, 231.
19. *RV*, vi, 44.9.
20. *RV*, iii, 62.10.
21. *RV*, viii, 42-3.
22. *RV*, viii, 48-0.
23. *RV*, vi, 50.7.
24. *RV*, iv, 19.7.
25. *RV*, vi, 24.7.
26. *RV*, viii, 70.5.
27. *RV*, viii, 17.14.
28. *RV*, viii, 4.7.
29. *YV*, xix, 9.
30. *RV*, x, 257.1.
31. *RV*, i, 30.9.
32. *RV*, iii, 51.4.
33. *RV*, i, 137.3.
34. *RV*, iv, 22.2.
35. *RV*, x, 28.12.
36. *RV*, iii, 52.8.
37. *RV*, iv, 55.4.
38. *Lokayata*, p. 535.
39. *RV*, viii, 18.22.
40. *RV*, x, 16.
41. *YV*, 19.30.
42. *RV*, x, 199. 2-3.
43. *RV*, x, 5. 3-8.
44. *Op, cit*. p. 79.
45. *AV*, v, 30.17.
46. *RV*, vii, 84.1.
47. *RV*, x, 186.1.

48. *RV*, viii, 3.24.
49. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 1, p. 386.
50. *Indian Philosophy* Vol. 1 p. 111.
51. *RV*, i, 164-46
52. *YV*, 32. 1.
53. *RV*, x, 129.2.
54. *RV*, i, 90.
55. *RV*, i, 89.
56. *The Call of the Vedas*, p. 44.
57. *Lokayata* p. 546.
58. *Ibid*, p. 546.
59. *Ibid*, p. 550.
60. *Critique of Hinduism*, p. 82.
61. *RV*, xii, 2.5.
62. *RV*, viii, 100.3.
63. *RV*, viii, 100.4.
64. *Sacred Books of the World*, p. 94.
65. *RV*, x, 12.9.
66. *RV*, x,18,8,9.
67. *RV*, x, 40 2.
68. *RV*, x, 18.2.
69. *AV*, xviii. 3.1.
70. *Fundamental Unity of India*, p. 120
71. *Op. cit*. p. 67.
72. *Buddhist India*, p. 97.

CHAPTER 2

1. *Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upanishads*, p. 260.
2. RV, i, 126. Translation by B.K. Ghosh as in the *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 1, p. 351.
3. *Religions of India*, p. 192.
4. *AV*, ix, 5-27.
5. It is necessary to note the distinction between the Brahmin (priest) and the Vedic literature called the *Brahmanas*. Many writers spell the two in the same way which sometime causes confusion.
6. *Op. cit*, p. 198.
7. *Op. cit*. p. 200.
8. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 1, p. 422.
9. *Indian Philosophy*, vi, p. 125.
10. *History of Indian Philosophy* Vol. 1, p. 13.
11. *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 203.
12. Quoted in *Buddhist India*, p. 240-41.
13. *A History of Indian Literature*, p. 208.
14. *Buddhist India*, p. 109.
15. *RV*, x, 90.
16. *A Critique of Hinduism*, p. 64.
17. *Ibid*, p. 64.
18. *Buddhist India*, p. 51.
19. *Ibid*, p. 52.
20. *Ibid*, p. 52.
21. *Ibid*, p. 102. The tree-spirit worship is still in vogue among Hindus all over India. In the author's neighbourhood in New Delhi at least three trees are worshipped alike by illiterate and educated Hindus just in the manner and for the reasons described by Rhys Davids.
22. *A History of Indian Literature* p. 208.
23. *Op. cit*. p. 197.
24. *The History of Aryan Rule in India*, p. 47-49.

CHAPTER 3

1. *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, iii, 14.9. the term *Brahman* in the *Upanishads* means the Universal Self and is not to be mixed up with either Brahmin (priest) or the Brahman literature.
2. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 1, p. 452.
3. *A History af Indian Literature*, p. 231.
4. *Sacred Books of the World*, p. 125.
5. K.V. Gajendragadkar says in his work *Neo-Upanishadic Philosophy* p. 16 : "The name of the Upanishads, as we may say in general, is legion. Thus we have various schemes of 108,144,183,365 and 1008 *Upanishads*".
6. *Hindu Civilisation*, Vol. 1, p. 111.
7. *Ibid*, p. 154-155.
8. *Buddhist India*, p. 31.
9. *Ibid*, p. 32.
10. *RV*, viii, 34, 16-18.
11. *YV*, xx, 25.
12. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 1, p. 248,
13. *Op. cit*, p. 415.
14. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. 1, p. 474.
15. *Op. cit.*, p. 266.
16. The translation of extracts from the Upanishads given in the chapter are by D.S. Sarma as given in his book *The Upanishad*: '*An Anthology*, published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.
17. *Lokayata*, p. 101,
18. *Sacred Books of the World*, p. 120.
19. K.V. Gajendragadkar : *Neo-Upanishadic Philosophy*, p. 109.
20. *Ibid*, p. 131.
21. *Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, p. 93.
22. *Kath. Up.*, vii, ii, 3.3.
23. *Manduk. Up.*, i, 1-2.
24. *Chhand. Up.*, xviii, i, 23-26.
25. *Kath Upanishad*, iii, 1-2-3. 20-21.
26. *Mundak, Up. in*, ii. 1-4.
27. *Kenopanishad*, i, 1-3.
28. *Kath Upanishad*, iii, 1.2.3.5.
29. *Kenopanishad*, ii, 2.3.
30. *Kathopanishad*, ii, 1-2.
31. *Kath Upanishad*, iii, 1-2-3.
32. *Manduk Upanishad*, v, iii, 1-8.
33. *Aitray Upanishad*, ii, iii, 1-3.
34. *Brihadaranyaka Up*, vii, 1,2-37.
35. *Ibid*, vii, 1-2-38.
36. *Kath. Up*, vii, 11, 3-5.
37. *Brih. Up*, v, 6.
38. Brih. Up, vi, 1.
39. Chhand. Up. xvii, 1.
40. *Kath Up*, ii. 1-13.
41. *Svetasvatara Up*, vi. 1.
42. *Brihad Up*, vii. 111. 4.9.
43. *Katha Up.*, i. 1.18.
44. *Katha Up*. i. 1.27.
45. *Katha. Up*. ii. 1.2.
46. *Neo-Upanishadic Philosophy*, p. 13.
47. M. N. Roy : *Materialism*, p. 77-78.
48. *Neo-Upanishadic Philosophy*, p. 52.
49. *Chhand. Up*. xvi, 6.1-4-8.
50. *Taittiriya. Up*. v. 111.2.
51. *Brihad. Up*. viii, IV, 2
52. *Brihad. Up*. ix, IX, 3-4.

53. *Chhand. Up*. v. III, 7.
54. *Chhandogya. Up*. iii, 1.8.9.
55. *Brihad*, ii. 4.12.
56. *Chhandogya*, iv, v, 15.
57. *Lokayata*, p. 101.

CHAPTER 4

1. *Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, p. 141
2. *Ibid*, p. 175
3. *Hindu Philosophy*, p. 103.
4. *The Philosophies of India*. p. 380.
5. *Ibid*, p. 51.
6. *Hindu Philosophy*, p. 45.
7. *Ibid*, p. 45.
8. *Ibid*, 24-25.
9. *Ibid*, p. 22.
10. Quoted by Zimmer in *Philosophies of India*, p. 612.
11. *Lokayata*, p. 60-61.
12. M. N. Roy; *Materialism*, p. 92-93.
13. *Indian Philosophy*, p. 68.
14. *Lokayata*, p. 408.
15. *Science and Philosophy*, p. 20.
16. *Heresies of the Twentieth century*, p. 53.
17. *Materialism*. p. 92.
18. Introduction to translation of Anirudha's comments on *Samkhya Sutra*, p. xx-xxi.
19. *Lokayata*, p. 263.
20. *Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, p. 143.
21. *Brahma Sutra* II, 1.22.
22. Quoted in *Lokayata*, p, 61.
23. Quoted in *Lokayata*, p. 440.
24. Quoted in *Lokayata*, p. 440.
25. *The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in historic Outline*. p. 105

CHAPTER 5

1. *Buddhist India*, p. 63.
2. *Ibid*, p. 112.
3. *Ibid*, p. 60.
4. *The History and Culture af the Indian People* Vol. Two, p. 479.
5. *A Source Book of Indian Philosophy*, p. 227.
6. *Lokayata*, p. 17.
7. *History of Philosophy-Eastern and Western*, p. 134.
8: *Philosophical Traditions of India*, p. 90.
9. D. Bhattacharya : *History of Philosophy—Eastern and Western*, p. 135.
10. D. Shastri : *A Short History of Indian Materialism and Hedonism*, p. 24.
11. D. Bhattacharya : *History of Philosophy—Eastern and Western*, p. 136.
12. *The Philosophical Tradition of India*, p. 88.

13. *Ancient Indian Atheistic Movements*, p. 41.
14. *A Short History of Ancient Materialism and Hedonism*, p. 24.
15. *Materialism*, p. 95.
16. *History of Philosophy—Eastern and Western*, p. 136.
17. *Sarvadarshana Sangraha* (Chowkhamba) (Translation By E. R. Cowell and A. E. Gough, p. 2-10.
18. *History of Philosophy—Eastern and Western*, p. 133.
19. For reference to materialist schools in Sanskrit literature see also *Bhagavad Gita* XVI, 8; *Shanti Parva*, 1414, 1430-42 and *Shalya Parva*, 3619 (of the *Mahabharata*) *Vishnu Purana* III, XVIII, 14-26 and The *Manusmriti* (Laws of Manu) II, ii, iii, 150, 161, IV, 30-61, 163. V, 89, VIII, 22, 309 IX, 65-66, XII, 33, 95-96.
20. *A Source Book of Indian Philosophy*, p. 228.
21. *Op-cit*, 137.
22. *History of Philosophy—Eastern and Western*, p. 138.
23. Norman Wentworth De Witt : *Epicurus and His Philosophy* p. 8.
24. *Lokayata*, p. 509.
25. *Lokayata*, p. 510.
26. *A History of Western Philosophy*, p. 256.
27. *Lokayata*, p. 510.
28. *Philosophies of India*, p. 264.
29. R. Thaper : *Ashoka and the Decline of Mauriyas*, p. 60.
30. *Philosophies of India*, p. 264-65.
31. *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XIV, p. xxviii.

CHAPTER 6

1. W. Douglas P. Hill : *The Bhagavad Gita*, p. 11.
2. *Buddhist India*, p. 60.
3. Quoted in *Lokayata*, p. 502.
4. Taken and slightly changed from Kosambi's *Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historic outline*.
5. *Lokayata*, p. 524.
6. *Indian Philosophy*, p. 130.
7. P. L. Narasu : *The Essence of Buddhism*, p. 24.
8. Christmas Humphreys : *Buddhism*, p. 76.
9. *Gita Rahasya*. p. 809.
10. There is a controversy whether it was a dish of mushrooms or pork that caused the Buddha's death. R. K. Mookerji says that "the Buddha stayed in the mango-grove of Chunda, the Smith,who treated him to his last meal consisti ng of hard and soft food and a quantity of *Sukaramaddava*, which the oldest commentators explain as 'the flesh of a pig made soft and oily' but which meant 'the sprout of a plant trodden by p igs, or a mushroom (*ahichchhattaka*) growing in a place trodden b y pigs, or a flavouring .substance." *Hindu Civilization, Part II* p. 262 But my friend, V. R. Narula, an equally reliable authority on the subject, has pointed out to me that "the Buddha's death was due to dysentry brought on by *sukra-maddva*

(hogflesh) which was served to him by Chunda, a new disciple... Trying to interpret the term *sukra-maddava*, not as hogflesh but as bamboo-shoots trampled by hogs or as mushrooms grown in a place frequented by hogs is a futile exercise".

11. *Culture and civilization af Ancient India in Historic outline*, p. 111.
12. *Ibid*, p. 107.
13. *Philosophies of India*, p. 158.
14. *A History of Indian Literatnre*, Part. I. p. 426.
15. Winternitz : *A History of Indian Literature*, p. 436.
16. M. N. Roy : *Materialism*, p. 101.
17. *Philosophies of India*, p. 270.
18. E. B. Havell : *History of Aryan Rule in India*, p. 56.

CHAPTER 7

1. *History of Aryan Rule in India*, p. 89.
2. *Hindu Civilization*, Part. II, p. 211.
3. *The History & Culture af the Indian People*, Vol. Two, p. 36.
4. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Two. p. 33.

5 & 6 13th Major Rock Edict of Ashoka. The translations of Edicts given in this chapter are taken from Romila Thapar's book *Ashoka and the Decline of the Mauriyas.*

7. Second Rock Edict.
8. Fourth Major Rock Edict.
9. Eleventh Rock Edict.
10. First Rock Edict.
11. Second Rock Edict.
12. Third Rock Edict.
13. Sixth Rock Edict.
14. Fifth Rock Edict
15. Fourth Pillar Edict.
16. Seventh Rock Edict.
17. Twelfth Rock Edict.
18. Third Pillar Edict.
19. Seventh Pillar Edict.
20. Fourteenth Pillar Edict.
21. Tenth Rock Edict.
22. First Pillar Edict.
23. Seventh Pillar Edict.
24. Minor Rock Inscription.
25. Second Rock Edict.
26. Second Edict.
27. Seventh Pillar Edict.
28. First Pillar Edict.
29. 13th Major Rock Edict.
30. 13th Major Rock Edict.
31. *Buddhist India*, p. 132.
32. *Ashoka and the Decline of Mauriyas*, p. 3.
33. *Buddhist India*, p. 134.
34. *Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical outline*, p. 163.
35. *Buddhist India*, p. 134.
36. *Ashoka and Decline of the Mauriyas*, p. 1.
37. *History of the Aryan Rule in India*, p. 97.
38. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. two, p. 548.
39. *Ibid*, p. 591.
40. *Ibid*, p. 282.
41. Quoted in *Lokayata*, p. 365.

42. *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India*, p. 65.
43. *Ibid*, p. 135.
44. *Ibid*, p. 135.
45. *Ibid*, p. 135.
46. *Arthashastra* iv. 11.
47. *Social and Rural Economy of North India*, p. 137.
48. *Ibid*, p. 243.
49. *Ibid*, p. 125.
50. *Ibid*, p. 184.
51. *Ibid*, p. 105.
52. *Ibid*, p. 93.
53. *Ibid*, p. 235.
54. *Ibid*, p. 243.
55. *Ibid*, p. 225.
56. *The History and Culture of the Indian People* Vol. Two p. 602.
57. *Ibid*, p. 528.
58. *Social and Rural Economy, of North India*, p. 80.
59. *Ibid*, p. 88.
60. *Ibid*, p. 232.
61. *Ibid*, p. 229.
62. *Ibid*, p. 289.
63. *Buddhism*, p. 207.
64. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Two, p. 528.
65. *Ibid*, p. 604.

CHAPTER 8

1. *The History of Aryan Rule in India*, p. 141
2. *Ibid*. p. 137-138
3. *Ibid*, p. 156
4. *The Wonder That Was India*, p. 265-66
5. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Four p. 293.
6. *Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, p. 179.
7. *A History of India*, Vol. 1., p. 129
8. *The history of Aryan Rule in India*, p. 150
9. *Ibid*, p. 102.
10. *Buddhist India*, p. 138.
11. *Rajatarangini*, i, 148.
12. B. G. Tilak : *Gita Rahasya*, p. 48
13. *Lokayata*, p. XV
14. R. Thapar, *Ashoka and Decline of the Mauriyas*, p. 200
15. *Rajatarangini*, i, 140
16. *Ibid*, i, 180
17. *Ibid*, i, 181
18. *Ibid*, i, 200
19. *Ibid*, i, 186
20. P. Lakshmi Narasu : *The Essence of Buddhism* p. 39-40. In the introduction to this book, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar says "It is the best book on Buddhism that has appeared so far (1948)
21. *Humanist*, London, December 7, p. 359-60.
22. Quoted by Rhys Davids in *Buddhist India*, p. 146
23. *Buddhist India*, p. 146
24. *Ibid*, p. 140.
25. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. three, p. 541.
26. *Buddhist India*, p. 110.
27. *Materialism*, p. 102.
28. *Op. cit.* p. 5.

CHAPTER 9

1. *Indian Inheritance*, Vol. iii, p. 67.
2. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Two, p. 338.
3. *History of Aryan Rule in India*, p. 163.
4. Quoted in *Lokayata*, p. 166.
5. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. three p. 568-69
6. *Ibid*, p. 574.
7. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Two. p. 567.
8. *Tho History of Aryan Rule in India*, p. 122-123.
9. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Three, p. 541.
10. *Buddhist India*, p. 98.
11. Quoted in *Gita Rahasya*, p. 129.
12. *Lokayata*, p. 375
13. *Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, p. 35.

CHAPTER 10

1. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 2[illegible].
2. *Gita Rahasya*, p. 785.
3. *The Teaching of the Gita*, p. 18- .
4. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 14.
5. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 19
6. *The Discovery of India*, p. 90.
7. *Myth and Reality*, p. 16.
8. *Gita-Rahasya*, p. 799.
9. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 14.
10. *The Song-Celestial*, p. viii.
11. *Myth and Reality*, p. 16.
12. *Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historic Outline*, p. 114.
13. *Gita Rahasya*, p. 740-41.
14. *Myth and Reality*, p. 19.
15. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 13-14.
16. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 21.
17. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 142.

CHAPTER 11

1. B.G., I, 29-32. The translation of the *Bhagavad-Gita* verses used by me is either by B.G. Tilak, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, Swami Chidbhavananda or Mrs. Annie Besant.
2. B.G. I, 33-39, Madhusudana, Madhava, Keshava and Janardana are other names of Sri Krishna.
3. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 92.
4. *B.G.* I, 40-46
5. *B.G.* II, 2-3.
6. *B.G.* II, 6-8.
7. *B.G.* II, 9.
8. *The Bhagavad-Gita* p. 101.

CHAPTER 12

1. Quoted in *Quest for Original Gita*, p. 91.
2. *BG.* XIII, 4.
3. *BG.* II, 11
4. *BG.* II, 18.
5. *BG.* II, 26.
6. *BG.* II, 14.
7. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 103
8. *BG.* II, 31-32-33.
9. *BG.* II, 34, 35, 36, 37.
10. *BG.* II, 40.
11. Dr. Radhakrishnan : *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 115.
12. *BG.* II, 47-48.
13. *BG.* II, 53.
14. *BG.* II, 54.
15. *BG.* II, 60, 61
16. *BG.* II, 71.
17. *BG.* III, 1.
18. *BG.* IV, 2
19. *BG.* IV, 37.
20. *BG.* V. 1
21. *BG.* V, 2
22. *BG.* V, 4
23. *BG.* VI, 1
24. *BG.* VI, 33
25. *BG.* VI, 34
26. *BG.* VI, 37-38
27. *BG.* VIII, I
28. *BG.* IX, 34
29. *BG.* X, 12, 14
30. *BG.* X, 17
31. *BG.* IX, 1-2
32. *BG.* XI, 1-4
33. *BG.* XI, 8
34. *BG.* XI, 24- 25
35. *BG.* XI, 40
36. *BG.* XI, 43
37. *BG.* XI, 47-48.
38. *BG.* XI, 32-34
39. *BG.* XI, 35
40. *BG.* XII, 1
41. *B.G.* XIII, 1
42. *BG.* XIII, 278
43. *BG.* XII, 30
44. *BG.* XIV, 23, 26
45. *BG.* XVI, 5
46. *BG.* XVIII, 57, 58
47. *BG.* XVIII, 63
48. *BG.* XVIII, 64-66
49. *BG.* XVIII, 73
50. *Quest For Original Gita*, p. 50
51. *Ibid*, p. 31
52. *Ibid*, p.54

CHAPTER 13

1. *Gita Dhyanam*, 4
2. *Myth and Reality*, p. 29
3. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 13-14
4. *E.W. Hopkins* : *Religions of India*, p. 390
5. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 20
6. *Ibid*, p. 21
7. *Ibid*, p. 54
8. *BG.* iv, 11
9. *BG.* xiii, 25-26
10. *BG.* iv, 33
11. *BG.* iv, 38
12. *BG.* iv, 37
13. *BG.* iv, 39
14. *BG.* iv, 36
15. *BG.* iii, 17-18
16. *BG.* iii, 20
17. *BG.* iii, 19
18. *BG.* iii 21-24
19. *BG.* v, 1
20. *BG.* v, 4-5

21. *BG*. xii, 2
22. *BG*. xii, 6-7
23. *BG*. xii, 5
24. *BG*. xii. 8
25. *BG*. xii, 20
26. *BG*. xiii, 25-26
27. *BG*. xiii, 20
28. *BG*. xiii, 30
29. *BG*. xiii, 21
30. *BG*. xiii, 28
31. *BG*. xiii, 29
32. *BG*. xiii, 31
33. *BG*. xv, 16-17
34. *BG*. vii, 20-22
35. *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, p. 313
36. *In Quest of Original Gita*, p. 41
37. *A Critique of Hinduism*, p. 96
38. *Myth and Reality*, p. 16
39. *BG*. il, 56
40. *BG*. ii, 62-65
41. *BG*. iv, 41-42
42. *BG*. iii, 17-18
43. *BG*. vi, 5-6
44. *BG*. v, 19
45. *BG*. v, 24
46. *BG*. vi, 21-23
47. *BG*. vi, 21-23
48. *BG*. vi, 16-17
49. *BG*. vi, 29
50. *BG*. vi, 32
51. *BG*. xii, 15
52. *BG*. xii, 18-19
53. *BG*. iv, 13
54. *BG*. ix-29
55. *BG*. vi, 32
56. *A Critique of Hinduism*, p. 96
57. *BG*. vi, 16-17
58. *BG*. vi. 29
59. *BG*. vi, 32
60. *BG*. xii, 15
61. *BG*. xii, 18-19
62. *A Critique of Hinduism*, p. 96

CHAPTER 14

1. *Quest for the Original Gita*, p. 1-3
2. *Ibid*, p. 23
3. *Myth & Reality*, p. 17
4. *Culture & Civilisation of ancient India in Historic Outline*. p. 207
5. *BG*. ii, 37
6. *BG*. xi, 33
7. *BG*. ii, 46
8. *BG*. ii, 53
9. *BG*. ix, 17
10. *BG*. x, 22
11. *BG*. xvi, 23, 24
12. *BG*. xvii, 5-6
13. *BG*. vi, 5-6
14. *BG*. iii, 17-18
15. *BG*. vi, 35
16. *BG*. xvi, 21-22
17. *BG*. iii, 27
18. *BG*. iii, 33
19. *BG*. xi, 32-33
20. *BG*. xviii, 61-62
21. *BG*. ii, 41
22. *BG*. iv, 33
23. *BG*. iv, 36
24. *BG*. iv, 83
25. *BG*. iv, 37
26. *BG*. ii, 49
27. *BG*. ii, 50
28. *BG*. ii, 63
29. *BG*. ii, 66
30. *BG*. iii, 42
31. *BG*. xlii, 3
32. *BG*. iii, 43
33. *BG*. xviii, 66
34. *BG*. x, 4-5

35. *BG.* v, 1
36. *BG.* v, 2
37. *BG.* v, 4
38. *BG.* vi, 46
39. *BG.* ii, 48
40. *BG.* vi, 10-14
41. *BG.* viii, 12
42. *BG.* ix, 5
43. *BG.* x, 7
44. *BG.* xi, 47
45. *BG.* xii, 6
46. *BG.* ix, 27-28
47. *BG.* x, 10
48. *BG.* vii, 25
49. *BG.* ii, 50
50. *BG.* xii, 2
51. *BG.* viii, 28
52. *BG.* iii, 10-11
53. *BG.* iii, 15
54. *BG.* ii, 28
55. *BG.* viii, 18
56. *BG.* viii, 19
57. *BG.* vii,4
58. *BG.* ix, 8
59. *BG.* xiii, 5-6
60. *BG.* vii, 5-6
61. *BG.* viii, 20
62. *BG.* xiv, 3-4
63. *Quest for Original Gita*, 70-71
64. *BG.* iii, 11-12
65. *BG.* xviii, 36-39
66. *BG.* v, 22
67. *BG.* vii, 9
68. *The Teaching of the Gita*, p.13
69. *Myth & Reality*, p. 17

CHAPTER 15

1. *BG.* iii, 31-32
2. *BG.* vii, 14
3. *BG.* vii, 15
4. *BG.* xi, 11-12
5. *BG.* iv, 40
6. *BG.* iv, 41
7. *BG.* xvii, 1
8. *BG.* xvii, 5-6
9. *BG.* xvi, 4
10. *BG.* xvi, 7
11. *BG.* xvi, 8
12. *BG.* xvi, 9
13. *BG.* xvi, 10
14. *BG.* xvi, 18
15. *BG.* xvi, 14
16. *BG.* xvi, 15
17. *BG.* xvi, 17
18. *BG.* xvi, 18
19. *BG.* xvi, 16
20. *BG.* xvi, 19
21. *BG.* xvi, 20
22. *BG.* xviii, 58
23. *BG.* xvi, 5

CHAPTER 16

1. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 12
2. *BG.* ii, 18
3. *BG.* xiii, 20-21
4. *BG.* xv, 17
5. *BG.* iii, 42
6. *BG.* xiii, 34
7. *BG.* xv, 4
8. *BG.* iii, 43
9. *BG.* vii, 14
10. *BG.* ix, 14
11. *BG.* ix, 22
12. *BG.* ix, 34
13. *BG.*, xii, 8
14. *BG.* xiii, 2

15. *BG*. xiii, 5
16. *BG*. xviii, 61-62
17. *BG*. xviii, 65
18. *BG*. xviii, 66
19. *BG*. x. 10
20. *BG*. x, 27
21. BG. x. 28, Had the dialogue taken place in modern times Sri Krishna would certainly have declared that "of the weapons I am the Atom Bomb".
22. *BG*. x, 30
23. *BG*. x, 34
24. *BG*. x. 36
25. *BG*. x, 38
26. *BG*. x, 41
27. *BG*. iv, 7
28. *BG*. iv, 8

CHAPTER 17

1. *BG*. ii, 3
2. *BG*. xviii, 59
3. *BG*. ii, 71
4. *BG*. v, 32
5. *BG*. v, 23
6. *BG*. v, 24
7. *BG*. xii, 13, 14
8. *The Teaching of the Gita*, p. 4
9. *BG*. ii, 3
10. *BG*. ii, 18
11. *BG*. ii, 31-37
12. Dr. Radhakrishnan asks to "contrast this with the central teaching of the Gita that one should be indifferent to praise and blame". (*The Bhagavad-Gita*. p. 113)
13. *BG*. iii, 30-32
14. *BG*. xi, 32-34
15. *BG*. xviii, 58-59
16. *BG*. xviii, 73
17. *Myth and Reality*, p. 19
18. *Quoted in Buddhist India*, p. 65
19. D.P. Chattopadhyay : *Indian Philosophy*. p. 191
20. Quoted in *Materialism* by M.N. Roy, p. 17-18

CHAPTER 18

1. *BG*. vii, 20-21
2. *BG*, vii, 23
3. *BG*. iv, 13
4. *BG*. xviii, 41
5. *BG*. vviii, 42
6. *BG*. xviii, 43
7. *BG*. xviii, 44
8. *BG*. xviii, 45
9. *BG*. xviii, 47
10. *BG*. iii, 35
11. *BG*. ix, 32-33
12. *BG*. xviii, 48
13. *BG*. iv, 26-27
14. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 169
15. *BG*. iii, 10
16. *BG*. iii, 14
17. *BG*. iii, 12-13
18. *BG*. xvii, 13
19. *BG*. iv, 31
20. *BG*. iii, 16
21. *BG*. ix, 26
22. *BG*. ix, 24
23. *BG*. xvii, 23
24. *BG*. xvii, 23-24.
25. *BG*. xviii, 5-6
26. *BG*. xvi, 23

27. *BG*. ii, 46
28. *BG*. ii, 53
29. *BG*. xvi, 24
30. *BG*. xvii, 5,6
31. *BG*. xv, 15
32. *BG*. ix, 17
33. *BG*. viii, 24-26
34. *Gita Rahasya*, p. 410

CHAPTER 19

1. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 69
2. *BG*. ii, 47
3. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 66
4. *BG*. ii, 48
5. *BG*. iii, 8
6. *BG*. iii, 9
7. *BG*. iii, 19
8. *BG*. iii, 20
9. BG. iii, 21
10. BG. iii, 22-24. The reference seems to be to the fear expressed by Arjuna in the beginning of the dialogue regarding corruption in the castes.
11. *BG*. iii, 25-26
12. *BG*, iv, 14-15
13. *BG*. iv, 20-23
14. *Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 58
15. *BG*. v, 11
16. *BG*. xii, 6-7
17. *BG*. v, 12
18. *BG*. xviii, 7-9
19. *BG*. xviii, 10
20. *BG*. xviii, 11
21. *BG*. xviii, 23
22. *BG*. xviii, 24-25
23. *BG*. xviii, 26-28

CHAPTER 20

1. *Brihadaranyaka*, iv, 4, 22
2. *Ibid*, v, 14-8
3. *Chhandogya* v, 24, 3
4. *Kaushitaki*, 3, 1
5. *Katha* ii, 24
6. *Ibid*, iii, 7, 8
7. *BG*. ii, 17
8. *BG*. ii, 19
9. *BG*. ii, 20
10. *BG*. ii, 21
11. *BG*. xi, 32-34
12. *BG*. iii, 27-28
13. *BG*. v, 8-9
14. *BG*. xviii, 17
15. *Gita Rahasya*, p. 1183
16. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 868
17. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 357
18. *Essays on the Gita*, p. 543
19. *Sacred Books of the World*. p. 122

CHAPTER 21

1. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 12
2. *Ibid*. p. 11
3. *The Culture and Civilsaition of Ancient India in Historical outline*, p. 207
4. *A History of Indian Literature*, p. 438

5. *The Teaching of the Gita*, p. 2
6. *The Murder of the Mahatma*. p. 274.
7. *The Bhagavad Gita*, p-22
8. *Ibid*, p. 21
9. *The Art of Life in the Bhagavad-Gita* p. 8
10. *The Bhagavad-Gita* p. 3
11. *The Bhagavad-Gita* p-3
12. *The Art of Life in the Bhagavad-Gita* p. 37
13. *The Teaching of Gita*, p. 30
14. *The Bhagavad Gita*, p. 35
15. *Gita Rahasya*, p. xxv

CHAPTER 22

1. Quoted in *Gita Rahasya*, p. 27
2. *Ibid*, p. 29-30
3. Zimmer : *Philosophies of India*, p. 414
4. *The History and Culture of the Indian People* vol. Four, p. 359
5. *Philosophies of India*, p. 414
6. The first time presumably being when the *Bhagavad-Gita* was composed by Krishna-Dvaipayana Vyasa.
7. *Gita Rahasya*, p. 18.
8. *A Critique of Hinduism*, p. 119
9. *Philosophies of India*, p. 463
10. Quoted in *Materialism* p-108-109
11. *Ibid*, p. 108
12. *Ibid*, p. 109
13. *Philosophies of India*, p. 460-61
14. Quoted by Zimmer in *Philosophies of India* p. 458
15. *Gita Rahasya*, p-21-22
16. *Introduction to Vedantin*, p. 125

CHAPTER 23

1. "The word 'Hindu' does not occur at all in our ancient literature. The first reference to it in an Indian book is, I am told, in a Tantrik work of the eighth century A. D., where 'Hindu' means people and not followers of a particular religion. But it is clear that the word is a very old one as it occurs in the Avesta and in old Persian." (Discovery of India)
2. *Rajatarangini*, v. 125
3. *Gita Rahasya*, p. xxv
4. *In Quest of Original Gita*, p. vii,
5. *BG*. iii, 21
6. *Myth and Reality*, p. 19
7. *The Mahabharata* p. 280
8. *Ibid*, p. 290
9. *Ibid*, p. 289
10. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, vol. Four p. 318
11. *A History of Indian Literature*, p. 501
12. *Ibid*, p. 500.
13. *Ibid*, p. 530.

14. Translation of the verses of the *Mahabharata* is by Heinrich Zimmer as given in his *Philiosophies of India* p. 124.
15. Quoted in *A History of Indian Literature*, p. 606.
16. *Myth and Reality*, p. 35.
17. *Philosophies of India*, p. 381.
18. *Hindu View of Life*, p. 37.
19. *Ibid*, p. 77 & (4) *Essential Features of Indian culture*, p. 6.
20. *Ibid*, p. 9.
21. *Ibid*, p. 7.
22. *Ibid*, p. 10.
23. *Hindusim-Doctrine and Way af Life*, p. 28.
24. *Op. cit* p. 32.
25. *The Crisis of India*, p. 154.
26. *Ranade, Gandhi, Jinnah*, p-20.
27. *Myth and Reality*, p-35-36 wording slightly altered.
28. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 83-84.
29. *Hinduism-Doctrine and Way of Life*, p-37.
30. *Discovery of India*, p. 214

CHAPTER 24

1. *Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India in Historic outline* p. 192.
2. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, vol. Three, p. 22.
3. *Ibid*, p. xii.
4. *Ibid*, p. xv.
5. *The Discovery of India* p. 117.
6. *Ashoka and Decline of the Mauryas*, p. 168.
7. *Ibid* p. 203.
8. *The History and Culture of the Indian Peoples*, vol, Three, p. 15.
9: *Ibid* p. 292.
10. *Ibid*, p. 324-25.
11. *Buddhist India*, p. 68.
12. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, vol. Three, p. 561.
13. *Ibid*, p. 371.
14. *Buddhist India*, p-68.
15. *Quoted in Buddhist India*, p. 65.
16. *Aryan Rule in India, p*. 147.
17. *Op. cit*, vol, three p. xxi.
18. *Op. cit* vol. three p, 601.
19. *Heresies of the Twentieth Century*, p. 106-107.
20. *From the History and Culture of the Indian people*, vol. Three, p. x.
21. *Ibid*, vol. Four, p. xvii

CHAPTER 25

1. Quoted in *Aryan Rule in India*, p. 167.
2. *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. from, p. 370.
3. *Ibid*, Vol. five. p. 496.
4. *Ibid*, P. 371.
5. *Ibid*, Vol. Four, p. 371.
6. *Aryan Rule in India*, p. 163.

7. *Ibid*, p. 163.
8. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Five, p. 375.
9. *Ibid*, Vol. Six, p. 591.
10. *Ibid*, p. 591.
11. *Ibid*, p, p. 592.
12. *A History of India*, Vol. I, p. 247.
13. Ronald Segal : The Crisis of India, p. 74.
14. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. VI, p. 373.
15. *Ibid*, vol. v. p. 476.
16. *The Discovery of India*, p. 187.
17. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. four, p-391.
18. *Ibid*. p. 391.
19. *A History of India*. Vol. I. 210.
20. *Nationalism in India*, p-50.
21. *The History and Culture of the Indian people*, Vol. Five, p. 126-127.
22. *The Discovery of India*. p. 210.
23. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Five, p. 20.
24. *Ibid*, p. 20.
25. *Ibid*, Vol six, p-629.
26. *Ibid*, p. 629.
27. *Ibid*, p. 629.
28. *Myth and Reality* p. 35-36.
29. *Philosophies of India*, p-83.

CHAPTER 26

1. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Three, p. 46.
2. *Mediaeval India*, Vol. I, p. 73.
3. *Op. cit.*, p. 251.
4. *Mediaeval India*, Vol. I, p. 97.
5. *Op. cit.*, p. 512.
6. *Ibid*, p. 199.
7. *Ibid*, p. 198.
8. *Mediaeval India*, Vol, II, p. 472.
9. *A History of India*, Vol II, p. 55.
10. *Ibid*, p. 52.
11. *Mediaeval India*, Vol. II. p. 276.

CHAPTER 27

1. Philip Woodruff : *The Men who Ruled India*, Vol. I, p-81.
2. *Travels in India*, p. 231.
3. *The Men who Ruled India*, Vol, I, p. 174.
4. *Ibid*, Vol, I , p. 21.
5. E. Thompson and G. Garret : *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 63. (3) *Michael Edwards, Raj*, p. 21.
6. *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 56.
7. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol, Ten, p. 432. (2) *Ibid*, p. 23.
8. Bhagwan Das : *Thus spoke Ambedkar*, p. 10-11.

9. *Ibid*, p. 11.
10. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol, Ten, p. 9.
11. *Ibid*, p. 8.
12. *The Men who ruled India*, Vol, I, p. 249.
13. *The History and Culture of the Indian People* Vol, Nine, p. 90.
14. *Men who ruled India*, Vol, I, p. 260.
15. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Ten, p. 275.
16. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Ten, p. 22.
17. *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p, 328.
18. *The Men that Ruled India*, Vol. I, p. 255.
19. *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 326-227.
20. *A History of India*, Vol. II, p-119.
21. *The History and Culture of the India People*, Vol. Ten, p. 22.
22. *The Men who Ruled India*, Vol. I, p. 262.
23. Quoted by V. R. Narla : "Religion and Society" in the *Radical Humanist*, November, 1972.
24. *The Men who Ruled India*, p. 262-263.
25. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Ten.
26. *The History and Culture of the Indian People.* Vol. ten, p. 21.

CHAPTER 28

1. *Philosophies of India*, p. 278.
2. *Materialism*, p. 110,
3. *Philosophies of India* p. 29-30.
4. *Ibid*, p. 342.
5. *Ibid*, p. 334.
6. *Ibid*, p. 34.
7. *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 324-25.
8. *The Men who Ruled India*, Vol. I p. 101.
9. Michael Edwardes : *Raj* p. 71.
10. *The History and culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Ten, p. 5.
11. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Ten, p. 6.
12. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. ten, p. 34-35.
13. Quoted in *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, p. 430-431.
14. *Ibid*, p. 431.
15. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. ten, p. 92.
16. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. ten, p. 266.
17. *Indian Scientists*, p. 249.
18. *Ibid*, p. 259.
19. *Ibid*, p. 17.
20. *Ibid*, p. 26.
21. *Ibid*, p. 25.
22. *Ibid*, p. 29.
23. *Ibid*, p. 30.
24. *Ibid*, p. 34.
25. *Ibid*, p. 81.
26. *Ibid*, p. 88.
27. *Ibid*, p. 112.
28. *Ibid*, p. 114.
29. *Ibid*, p. 106.
30. *Ibid*, p. 107.
38. *Ibid*, p. 107.
32. *Ibid*, p. 117.
33. *Ibid*, p. 135.
34. *Ibid*, p. 163.

35. *Ibid*, p. 147-48.
36. *Ibid*, p. 164.
37. *Ibid*, p. 178.
38. *Ibid*, p. 178.
39. *Ibid*, p. 234.
40. *Ibid*, p. 218.
41. *Ibid*, p. 218.
42. *Op. cit*, p. 89.
43. *Op. cit*, p. 89.

CHAPTER 29

1. *The Men who Ruled India*, Vol. I, p. 121.
2. *Ibid*, p. 121.
3. *Rise and Fulfilment of British Empire in India*, p. 320.
4. Quoted by Michael Edwards in *Raj*, p. 91.
5. *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 194.
6. E. Thompson : *Making of Indian Princes*, p. 273-74 quoted in *Discovery of India*, p. 301.
7. *The Men who Ruled India*, Vol. I. p. 179.
8. S. Swaminathan in *Indian Review* October 1973, p. 23.
9. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. ten, p. 36.
10. *Ibid*, Vol. ten, p. 34.
11. *Ibid*, p. 36.
12. *The Men who Ruled India*, Vol. 1, p. 74.
13. *Ibid*, p. 327.
14. *Noble Lives*, p. 13-14.
15. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. ten, p. 280.
16. *Ibid*, p. 381.
17. David Dilks : *Curzon in India* Part I, p. 245.
18. *Ibid*, p. 199.
19. *Ibid*. p. 211.
20. *Ibid*, p. 261.
21. *Ibid*, p. 246.
22. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. ten p. 13.
23. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. II nine, p. 863-70.
24. *A History of India*, Vol. II, p. 173.

CHAPTER 30

1. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. nine, p. 256.
2. *Fundamental Unity of India*, p. 9
3. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. nine, p. 314-15.
4. *Ibid*, Vol. ten, p. 382.
5. *Ibid*, p.382.
6. *Ibid*, p. 382.
7. *Ibid*, p. 383
8. *Ibid*, p. 383.
9. *Ibid*, Vol. ten, p. 383.
10. *Ibid*, p. 37.
11. *Ibid*, p. 236.
12. *Raj*. p. 140.
13. *Ibid*, p. 141.
14. *The Men who Ruled India*, Vol. I , p. 288.
15. R. P. Masani : *Dadabhai Naoroji*, p. 44.
16. *Ibid*, p. 54.
17. *Ibid*, p. 108.

18. *Ibid*, p. 137.
19. *Ibid*, p. 21.
20. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Ten, p. 256.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 257.
22. T. R. Deogirikar : *Gopalkrishna Gokhale*, p. 81.
23. *Ibid*, p. 203.
24. *Raj.* p. 214.
25. *Ibid*, p 214.
26. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Ten, p. 530.
27. For biographical sketches of British lovers of India see *Foreign Friends of India's Freedom* by P. Kodanda Rao (PTI Book Co, Madras).

CHAPTER 31

1. *Noble Lives*, p. 12.
2. *Nationalism in India*, p. 66-67.
3. *Eighteen Fifty Seven*, p. 412.413.
4. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 625.
5. B. C. Pal. Quoted in *The History and Culture of the Indian People*. Vol. Ten, p. 92-93.
6. Quoted in *The Discovery of India*, p. 72.
7. *Paramahamsa Ramakrishna*, p. 117.
8. *Radical Humanist*, September, 1973.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Paramahamsa Ramakrishna*, p. 113.
11. *Ibid*, p. 174.
12. *Ibid*, p. 200-1.
13. *Ibid*, p. 203.
14. *Ibid*, p. 127.
15. *Ibid*, p. 115.
16. *Ibid*, p. 149.
17. *Ibid*, p. 204.
18. *Op. cit.*
19. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Ten, p. 122.

CHAPTER 32

1. *Paramahamsa Ramakrishna*, p. 33.
2. Vivekananda : *On Himself*, p. 266.
3. *On himself*, p. 230.
4. *Collected Works*, Vol. IV, p. 363.
5. *Collected Works*, Vol. I. p. 17.
6. *Collected Works*, Vol. III, p, 111.
7. *On Himself*, p. 176-177.
8. *On Himself*, p. 9-10.
9. *Collected Works*, Vol. IV, p. 210.
10. *Collected Works*, Vol. III, p. 221.
11. *Collected Works*, Vol. III p. 322.
12. *Collected Works*, Vol. III p. 323.
13. *Collected Works*, Vol. II. p. 314.
14. *On Himself*, p. 179.
15. *Ibid*, p. 208.

16. *Ibid*, p. 135. 17. *Ibid*, p. 234.
18. *Ibid*, p. 234.
19. *Collected Works*, Vol. I, p. 230.
20. *Collected Works*, Vol. III, p. 216.
21. *Collected Works*, Vol. III, p. 317.
22. *Ibid*, p. 311.
23. *Collected Works*, Vol. I, p. 15.
24. *On Himself*, p. 220-21.
25. *Collected Works*, Vol. III, p. 107.
26. *Collected Works*, Vol II, p. 336.
27. Quoted in *The Discovery of India*, p. 166.
28. *Ibid*, p. 166.
29. *Collected Works*, Vol. II, p. 389.
30. *Ibid*, p. 390. 31. *Ibid*, p. 390.
32. *The Discovery of India*, p. 316.
33. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Ten, p. 494.
34. *On Himself*, p. 74.
35. *Collected Works*, Vol. III, p. 204.
36. *The History and Culture of the India People*, Vol. Ten, p. 492.
37. *Swami Ram Tirth* p. 25. 38. *Ibid*, p. 26.
39. *Ibid*, p. 30. 40. *Ibid*, p. 39.
41. *Ibid*, p. 69. 42. *Ibid*, p. 50.
43. *Ibid*, p. 57. 44. *Ibid*, p. 93.
45. *Ibid*, p. 66. 46. *Ibid*, p. 69.
47. *Ibid*, p. 76. 48. *Autobiography* p. 210.
49. *The History and Culture of the Indian people*, Vol. Ten, p. 263.

CHAPTER 33

1. N.G. Jog : *Lokamanya Balgangadhar Tilak*, p. 31.
2. *Ibid*, p. 36. 3. *Ibid*, p. 193.
4. *Ibid*, p. 49.
5. *Ranade, Gandhi, Jinnah*, p. 27.
6. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 377
7. *Op. cit*, p. 175.
8. *Lokamanya Balgangadhar Tilak*, p. 123.
9. *Ibid*, p. 122. 10. *Gita Rahasya*, p. XXV.
11. *Gopalkrishna Gokhale*, p. 81.
12. *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 564.
13. *Nationalism in India*, p. 80. 14. *Ibid*, p. 81.
15. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. X, Part ii, p. 328.
16. *Ibid*, Vol. Eleven, p. 328. 17. *Ibid*, Vol. Eleven, p. 92.
18. *Ibid*, p. 244.
19. *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, p. 241.

CHAPTER 34

1. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Ten, p. 492.
2. *Annie Besant*, p. 27.
3. *Ibid*, p. 492.
4. *Mahayogi*, p. 22.
5. *Ibid*, p. 34.
6. *Prophet of Indian Nationalism*, p. 127.
7. *Mahayogi*, p. 127.
8. *Ibid*, p. 159.
9. *Ibid*, 72.
10. *Ibid*, p. 77.
11. *Ibid*, p. 80-81.
12. *Ibid*, p. 79.
13. *Ibid*, p, 25.
14. *Ibid*, p. 121.
15. *Ibid*, p. 123.
16. *Ibid*, p.123.
17. *Ibid*, p. 46.
18. *Ibid*, p. 140.
19. *Ibid*, p. 140.
20. *Ibid*, p. 140.
21. *Ibid*, p. 144-45.
22. *Ibid*, p. 145.
23. *Ibid*, p. 151.
24. *Ibid*, p. 143.
25. *Essays on the Gita*, p. 543.
26. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. x. 70.
27. *Reason and Beyond Reason*, p. 1.
28. *Ibid*. p. 5.
29. *Ibid*, p. 5-6.
30. *Ibid*, p. 6.
31. *Ibid*, p. 16.
32. *Ibid*, p. 17.
33. *Ibid*, p. 7.
34. *Mahayogi*, p. 179.
35. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, p. xi, 76.
36. *Nationalism in India*, p. 93.
37. *Autobiography*, p. 211.
38. *Asian ideas of East and West—Tagore and his Critics in Japan, China and India*, p. 64.
39. *Ibid*, p. 107.
40. *Ibid*, p. 148-49.
41. *Ibid*, p. 181.
42. B.P. Basu : *Rise of Christian power in India*, p. 974-75.
43. *Curzon in India*, p. 237.
44. Quoted in *Illustrated Weekly of India*, dated 13th May, 1973.
45. *Curzon in India*, p. 261.
46. Quoted in Nirad Chaudhury's *Autobiography*, p. 11.
47. *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*, p. 567.
48. *History and Culture of the Indian People*, X, II, p. 400.
49. *Autobiography*, p. 227.
50. *Raj*, p. 221.
51. Nirad Chaudhury : *Autobiography*, p. 326.

CHAPTER 35

1. Quoted in *Balgangadhar Tilak*, p. 138.
2. *Wavell* : *The Viceroy's Journal*, p. 51.
3. *Raj* : p. 329.

4. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven p. 245-46.
5. *Ranade, Gandhi, Jinnah*, p. 55.
6. *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, p. 186.
7. *Ibid*, p,. 370.
8. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 114-15.
9. *A History of India*, Part ii, p. 189.
10. *The Science of Satyagraha*, p. 115.
11. *The Teaching of the Gita*, p. 35.
12. *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (1961 edition), p. 14.
13. *Ibid*, p. 41.
14. *Ibid*, p. 48.
15. *Ibid*, p. 34.
16. *Ibid*, p. 35.
17. *Ibid*, p. 37.
18. *Ibid*, p. 37.
19. *Ibid*, p. 43.
20. *Ibid*, p. 93.
21. *Ibid*, p. 63.
22. *Ibid*, p. 60.
23. *Ibid*, p. 63.
24. *Ibid*, p. 101.
25. *Ibid*, p. 90.
26. *Ibid*, p. 89.
27. *Ibid*, p. 91.
28. *Ibid*, p. 91.
29. *Ibid*, p. 92.
30. *Ibid*, p. 45.
31. *Ibid*, p. 59.
32. *Ibid*, p. 59.
33. *Ibid*, p. 36.
34. *Ibid*, p. 93.
35. *Ibid*, p. 94.
36. *The Gandhian Alternative of Western Socialism*, p. 20.
37. *Ibid*, p. 27.
38. *Hind Swaraj*, p. 9.
39. *Ibid*, p. 31.
40. J.B. Kripalani : *Gandhi : His life and Thought*, p. 342.
41. *Gopalkrishna Gokhale*, p. 146.
42. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 319.
43. Quoted in *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 348-49.
44. *The Gandhian Alternative to Western Socialism*, p. 66.
45. *Discovery of India*, p. 340
46. *Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, p. 41.
47. *Ibid*, p. 42.
48. *Ibid*, p. 44.
49. *Ibid*, p. 48.
50. *Ibid*, p. 52.
51. *Ibid*, p. 50.
52. *Ibid*, p. 51.
53. *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*. p. 544-45.
54. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, p. 12.
55. *Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, p. 91.
56. *Ibid*, p. 99.
57. *Ibid*. p. 51.
58. *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, p. 464.
59. *Ibid*, p. 465.
60. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 559.
61. *Ibid*, p. 552.
62. *Autobiography*, p. 515.
63. *Ibid*, p. 516.
64. *Ibid*, p. 572.
65. *Ibid*, p. 523.
66. *Ibid*, p. 536.

67. *Ibid*, p. 523,
68. *Ibid*, p. 528.
69. *Ibid*, p. 533.
70. *Ibid*, p. 518.

CHAPTER 36

1. *Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. I (Orient Longman) quoted in *Swarajaya* (Madras), September 16, 1972.
2. *The Teaching of the Gita*, p. 83.
3. *The Teaching of the Gita*, p. 85.
4. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 999.
5. *Ibid*, p. 284.
6. *Ibid*, p. 340-41.
7. *Ibid*, p. 342.
8. *Ibid*, p. 525.
9. *Ibid*, 525.
10. *Ibid*, p. 679.
11. *Ibid*, p. 673.
12. *Ibid*, p. 485.
13. *Ibid*, p. 485.
14. *Ibid*, Vol. xi, p. 560.
15. *The Discovery of India*, p. 159.
16. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 359.
17. *Ibid*, p. 573.
18. Nirad Chaudhury : *Autobiography*, p. 415.
19. *Discovery of India*, p. 13·
20. *Ibid*, p. 16.
21. *Ibid*, p. 200.
22. *Ibid*, p. 200.
23. *Ibid*, p. 337.
24. *Ibid*, p. 269.
25. *Ibid*, p. 268.
26. *Ibid*, p. 294.
27. *Ibid*, p. 455.
28. *The Philosophy and Practice of Radical Humanism*, p. 15.
29. *Ibid*, p. 16.
30. *Ibid*, p. 18.
31. *Ibid*, p. 19.
32. *New Humanism*, p. 43.
33. *The Philosophy and Practice of Radical Humanism*, p. 200.
34. *New Humanism*, p. 36.
35. *Philosophy and Practice of Radical Humanism*, p. 23-24.
36. *Ibid*.
37. *New Humanism*, p. 40.
38. *Ibid*, p. 45.
39. *The Discovery of India*, p. 440.
40. *Asian ideas of East and West*, p. 309-10.
41. *Discovery of India*, p. 398.
42. Dhananjay Keer : *Dr. Ambedkar—Life and His Mission*, p. 167.
43. *Ibid*, p. 168.
44. *Ibid*, p. 184-85.
45. *Ibid*, p. 194.
46. *Ibid*, p. 273.
47. *Ibid*, p. 229.
48. *Ibid*, 230.
49. *Ibid*, p. 234.
50. *Ibid*, p. 219.
51. *Ibid*, p. 100.
52. *Ibid*, p. 228.
53. Quoted in *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 336.
54. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 93.
55. *Times of India*, May 21, 1974.
56. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 161.

CHAPTER 37

1. Quotations given in *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 645.
2. *Ibid*, p. 646.
3. *Ibid*, p. 629.
4. *Ibid*, p. 676.
5. *Ibid*, p. 657.
6. *Times of India*, May 21, 1974.
7. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 151.
8. *Ibid*, p. 162.
9. *Ibid*, p. 179.
10. *Wavell: the Viceroy's Journal*, p. 314.
11. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 757.
12. *Ibid*, p. 757-58.
13. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 94.
14. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 769.
15. *Ibid*, p. 780.
16. *India Wins Freedom*, p. 206-7.
17. *Hind Swaraj*, p. 65.
18. *Ibid*, p. 65.
19. *Annie Besant*, p. 63.
20. Quoted in *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 759.
21. *The Last Years of British India*, p. 245-46.
22. *Ibid*.

CHAPTER 38

1. *India Today and Tomorrow*, p. 4.
2. *Ibid*, p. 6.
3. *The Discovery of India*, p. 118.
4. *The Crisis of India*, p. 308.
5. Now subject to amendments made from time to time during the past years as will be discussed a little later.
6. *Nationalism in India*, p. 73.
7. *The History and Culture for the Indian People*, Vol. Eleven, p. 769.
8. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. Ten, p. 477.
9. *The Times of India* dated January 5, 1970.
10. *Illustrated Weekly of India*, dated April 22, 1973.
11. I was kept in detention without trial by the India-sponsored national Conference Government for nearly three years (1947-1950) because I, a born Kashmiri, not only supported the "juster and fair offer" of Nehru but also demanded its implemention. After release I was externed from the State and when I continued to lay stress publicly on the right of the State people to make a free choice, I was detained behind the bars by the Government of India for one year (1955-56).
12. For a detailed history of Kashmir dispute the reader may go through two of my books, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir* (Pamposh Publications) and *Kashmir in the Crucible* (Pearl Books)
13. *The Discovery of India*, p. 267

14. After his deposition and incarceration on August 9, 1953, Sheikh Abdullah, whenever he was free to express himself, challenged the State's accession to India and persistently demanded for twenty years that the Kashmiris should have the freedom to choose their future affiliations, whether they would like to stay on in India, accede to Pakistan or enjoy an independent sovereign status. In 1973, however, he again reversed his position and started saying that Kashmir has permanently become a part of India under the Indian Constitution of which he was one of the makers. He said Pakistan had no *locus standi* in Kashmir and the dispute, if any was between the people of the State and the Indian Government, the dispute was about the quantum of autonomy which the State people should enjoy. But, in any case, he frequently added, the State was an inalienable part of Indian Republic.
15. Quoted from the article as reprinted in *Imprint*, Bombay.
16. See my article "Bangla Desh : Realism, Adventure and Reason" published in *Radical Humanist* dated September 1971.
17. *Illustrated Weekly of India*, dated March 4, 1974.
18. *The Indian Express*, dated May 18, 1974.

CHAPTER 39

1. See, Khushwant Singh's review of *Portrait of a President* in the *Times of India* dated February 3, 1974.
2. *Ibid.* 3. *Ibid.*
4. *Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, p. 94.
5. *Ibid*, p. 99-100. Such feelings were unbecoming of a Vedant in and a believer in the Gita Doctrine which repeatedly stresses the importance of *Sukh-duk samah* (maintaining equal calm in pleasure and pain).
6. *Ibid.* 7. *Ibid.*
8. *In Different Saddles* p. 176.
9. *A History of India*, Vol. II, p. 254.
10. *The Civil Servant in India*, p. 300.
11. *Under Two Masters*, p. 234.
12. *Ibid*, p. 234. 13. *Ibid*, p. 236.
14. *Ibid*, p. 242.
15. *Illustrated Weekly of India*, dated November 12, 1972
16. *Times of India*, Dated 6th August 1963.
17. *Thus Spoke Ambedkar*, p. 35.
18. *Dr. Ambedkar : Life and Mission.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Indian Express*, September 4, 1972.
21. *Indian Express*, December 15, 1972.
22. *Indian Express*, May, 12, 1973.

23. *Indian Express*, dated November 16, 1972.
24. *The Statesman*, dated December, 7, 1973.
25. *The Lotus and the Robot*, p. 82-84.
26. *A History of India*, Vol. II, p. 257.

CHAPTER 40

1. Quoted by Palkhiwala in his article published in *Illustrated Weekly of India*, dated May 13, 1973.
2. *The Statesman*, dated May 14, 1973.
3. *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, dated May 13, 1973.
4. *Imprint*, dated June, 1974.
5. *Radical Humanist*, New Delhi, January, 1974.
6. *Wall Street Journal*, New York, dated April 16, 1974.
7. *The Statesman*, dated April 22, 1974.
8. *The Statesman*, dated April 12, 1973.
9. *Indian Express*, dated April 26, 1974.
10. *Indian Express*, dated November 24, 1974. See also Professor B.R. Shenoy's two articles in the *Times of India*, dated 5th and 6th October, 1973.
11. According to latest reports it was expected that from a loss of 13.31 crores during the previous year 14 public sector units would earn an overall profit of Rs. 8 crores during 1973-74. On the basis of this report the Government claimed that so far as the public undertakings are concerned "we have turned the corner".
    Among the units which have increased their production are Heavy Engineering Corporation, Machine Tool Corporation, Hindustan Machine Tools, Bharat Heavy Electricals and Mining and Allied Corporations.
12. *Indian Express*, dated April 26, 1974.
13. *The Radical Humanist*, dated January, 1973.
14. *The Statesman*, dated April 21, 1974.
15. *P.T.I. Report*, October 15, 1972.
16. *Illustrated Weekly of India*, September 19, 1972.
17. *Ibid.* 18. *Ibid.*
19. *Indian Express*, dated April 19, 1973.
20. *Indian Express*, dated June 25, 1974.
21. *Indian Express*, dated June 5, 1974.
22. *The Crisis of India*, p. 227.
23. *Indian Express*, dated April 15, 1973.
24. *Indian Express*, dated November 19, 1973.
25. *Indian Express*, dated May 28, 1974.
26. *Indian Express*, dated June 1, 1974.
27. *Indian Express*, dated June 19, 1974.
28. *Janata*, July 21, 1974.
29. *Indian Express*, dated July 13, 1974.

CHAPTER 41

1. *Wall Street Journal*, dated April 16, 1974.
2. *Imprint*, dated June, 1974.
3. *The Thought*, dated May 25, 1974.
4. *Indian Express*, dated May 29, 1974.
5. *Indian Express*, dated June 28, 1974.
6. Quoted in the *Hindustan Times*, dated May 19, 1974. See also *Radical Humanist*, dated June, 1974.
7. *Ibid.* 8. *Ibid.*
9. *Indian Express*, dated June 7, 1974.
10. *Indian Express*, dated May 22, 1974.
11. Nor were the apprehensions of India's smaller neighbours allayed when in August-September, 1974, Sikkim a tiny independent protectorate under 1950 Indo-Sikkim treaty was deprived of her status and converted into an associate state by methods which Tridib Chaudhary M.P. called "shameful" and the *Indian Express*, termed "a historic blunder." (vide Indian Express, September 6, 1974). In Nepal public demonstration were held against the Indian move.
12. *The Radical Humanist*, dated June, 1974, p. 9.
13. *Indian Express*, dated June 15, 1974.
14. *The Communist Party of India.*
15. *Indian Express* : dated March 2, 1974.
16. *Ibid*,
17. *Illustrated Weekly of India*, dated January 28, 1973.
18. *Ibid.* 19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Indian Express*, dated June 4, 1974.
22. *Wavell : The Viceroy's Journal*, p. 259.
23. *The Crisis of India*, p. 244.
24. *Indian Express*, dated November 17, 1972.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *The Statesman, New Delhi*, dated July 7, 1973.
27. *The Crisis of India*, p. 310.
28. *Indian Express*, dated 16th May, 1973.
29. Main Shakir : *Islam in India*, p: 12.
30. *Hindustan Times*, dated August, 1973.
31. *The Times of India*, dated March 1, 1974.
32. *The Hindustan Times*, dated October 10, 1973.

CHAPTER 42

1. *History of Philosophy—Eastern and Western*, Vol. One, p. 133.
2. *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, p. 564.
3. *Buddhist India*, p. 69. 4. *Ibid*, p. 96.
5. *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. VI, p. 547.

6. *The Adventure of the Black girl in Her Search for God*, p. 60.
7. *Materialism*, p. 74.
8. *Philosophies of India*, p. 83.
9. *The Lotus and the Robot*, p. 113.
10. *Ibid*,
11. *Mahayogi*, p. 50.
12. *Ibid*, p. 91.
13. *Hind Swaraj*, p. 37.
14. *The Lotus and the Robot*, p. 285.
15, *Ibid*, p. 276.

CHAPTER 43

1. *Aryan Rule in India*, p. 148.
2. *Janata*, Bombay, dated July 23, 1972.
3. *The Discovery of India*, p. 225.
4. *Autobiography*, p. 203.
5. *The Crisis of India*, p. 16-17.
6. *Ibid*, p. 34.
7. *Collected Works*, Vol. III, p. 109.
8. *Ibid*, Vol. II, p. 204.
9. *India—Today and Tomorrow*, p. 31.
10. *The Crisis of India*, p. 170-171.
11. *Reason, Romanticism and Revolution*, Vol. II, p. 219.
12. *Architects of Ideas*, p. 267.
13. *Time* Magazine dated June 24, 1974.
14. *New Humanism*, p. 1.
15. *The Communists Party of India*, p. 185.
16. *Ibid*, p. 72.
17. *Ibid*, p. 72.
18. *Ibid*, p. 242.
19. *Ibid*, p. 10.
20. *Ibid*, p. 29.
21. *Mahatma in the Marxist Mirror*, p. 15.
22. *Ibid*, p. 19.
23. *New Humanism*, p. 4.
24. *Philosophy and Practice of Radical Humanism*, p. 23.
25. *Ibid*, p. 25.
26. *New Humanism*, p. 40.
27. *Humanist*, London. December 1972.
28. *The Times of India* dated May 1, 1974.
29. *The Statesman*, dated April 17, 1974.
30. *Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*, p. 208.
31. See article "The Chinese Economy" in *the Times of India* dated June 21, 1974.
32. *The Sane Society*, p. 102.
33. *The Times of India* dated August 9, 1974,
34. *The Biological Times Bomb*, p. 19.
35. *Future shock*, p. 429,
36. *Ibid*, p. 429.
37. *Convocation Address to the University of Bombay, 1932*.

Index

A

B

C

L

M

N

R

S

Hinduism

Notes